

TEXTE DE VIRGINIE CHUIMER-LAYEN

De la série *Fire and Water*

## TOADFLAX ROUNDEL\*

De Kay Aplin

Oxydes et porcelaine, cuisson four  
à bois, avec introduction de soude.  
Ø 84 cm, 2019.

**S**culptrice céramiste, Kay Aplin n'est pas une artiste du feu comme les autres. Née en 1971, diplômée de l'université Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design de Londres - spécialité céramique et verre -, elle est aussi curatrice, créant, entre autres, des installations pour l'espace public et privé. En 2011, elle imagine The Ceramic House, maison et showroom où elle expose ses œuvres, notamment dans un rapport à l'architecture. Elue «Best Open House» au festival Artists Open Houses de Brighton, celle-ci accueille des artistes en résidence, pour lesquels elle organise des expositions internationales. Pleine de ressources, Kay Aplin n'hésite pas à collaborer avec des plasticiens d'autres univers, comme en témoignent ses pièces présentées lors du dernier Salon Collect, à la galerie Saatchi de Londres. En effet, *Fire and Water* est un ensemble de plusieurs rondeaux de céramique, symbolique de sa collaboration avec l'artiste sonore Joseph Young. Plus de six mois furent nécessaires à la réalisation de ces sept somptueuses œuvres murales, comprenant, en tout, environ deux cents petites formes en porcelaine. Lumière sur l'une d'entre elles, sur un savoir-faire et un esprit libre, ouvert, dépassant les frontières de son art.

### La nature sublignée par la science

Environ quarante et une pièces de porcelaine - telle de la dentelle aux lignes minuscules et sophistiquées - composent ce rondeau aux couleurs délicates. Kay Aplin a reproduit de minuscules plantes poussant aux bords d'une source naturelle, en Espagne. «Dans les Asturies où je résidais, j'ai cueilli de petits végétaux près d'une source. Afin d'en magnifier les détails les plus infimes, j'ai utilisé un microscope numérique me permettant aussi de créer

l'imagerie nécessaire pour réaliser des prototypes.» Kay Aplin avait déjà expérimenté cet instrument lors de résidences artistiques au Danemark, en 2014, et sur les îles Shetland, en 2016. «Je voulais réitérer cette expérience extraordinaire, apte à révéler la texture riche de la flore.» Linaire, euphorbe d'Irlande, mais aussi hellebore puant, menthe, tormentille et d'autres plantes non identifiées ont inspiré cette «rosace» qui semble tout droit sortie d'un conte des Mille et Une Nuits. De manière générale, Kay se nourrit du lieu où elle se trouve, traquant les moindres détails de la flore et de l'architecture environnantes.

### Magie du feu, de la terre et des couleurs

De telles œuvres exigent nécessairement rigueur, patience et virtuosité. «Après avoir créé mes prototypes à partir de quatorze dessins différents, je réalise des moules en plâtre pour chaque modèle. J'y coule alors la barbotine de porcelaine, qui permet d'obtenir en relief toutes les formes des végétaux, invisibles à l'œil nu. Viennent ensuite les étapes du séchage, de la glaçure et de la cuisson au feu de bois.» Durant celle-ci, Kay projette de la soude dans le four, jouant ainsi sur la texture et la brillance des surfaces. «L'effet de la soude est toujours imprévisible, ajoute-t-elle, cela me plaît beaucoup!» Quant à l'émaillage, elle utilise sa propre palette de couleurs, éloignées des tons réels. Ici, le mural présente un subtil dégradé de bleus et de gris turquoise, combinant des surfaces mates et brillantes : une invitation à la rêverie. Pour les autres, elle use d'une gamme nuancée d'ocres, de marrons ou encore de verts. «Les jeux d'ombre et de lumière, la couleur et les qualités réfléchissantes de la surface me fascinent. Je souhaite évoquer le mouvement à l'intérieur de la matière inerte.»

### Céramique visuelle, tactile et sonore

Inspirée par le spectaculaire, la céramiste s'efforce, selon ses dires, d'atteindre un sentiment d'exubérance par la couleur, le relief et l'échelle ambitieuse. Cependant, au-delà de son esthétique très raffinée et de sa haute technicité, c'est une vision contemporaine et poétique de la céramique qu'elle propose. En invitant le public à toucher ses pièces, elle lui permet d'interagir avec des œuvres visuellement stimulantes. *Fire and Water*, dont «le titre fait référence à la technique de cuisson au bois et à la source d'eau», est un jeu de porcelaines qui se touchent, s'admirent et s'écoulent... En effet, Kay Aplin convoque également notre ouïe en collaborant avec le plasticien sonore Joseph Young. «Je travaille avec Joseph depuis 2011. Pour parfaire notre installation à Collect, il a combiné deux sons. Le son binaural de la cuisson au four Anagama [à flamme directe, ndr], enregistré en 2018 lors de mon invitation au symposium sur le chauffage au bois à Kohila, en Estonie, et celui de la source, en Espagne.» À n'en pas douter, Kay Aplin épure la céramique de ses vieux clichés par le prisme d'une vision renouvelée de l'eau, de la terre et du feu, ses composantes intrinsèques.

\* Le rondeau de la linaire

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„Přemýšlela jsem, zda by Ceramic House neměl být muzeem, ale brzy jsem tuto myšlenku opustila. Je to krásné místo k bydlení, návštěvám se ale nebráním,“ říká Kay o svém originálním domě.

Vystudovala umění na Chelsea College of Art a už od doby jejího ukončení v roce 1995 se zabývala tvorbou do architektury. Zaujala ji především keramická hlína, možnost jejího tvarování, hry barev glazury i to, že vytváří reliéf, na který si může každý i sáhnout, vnímat tak umění nejen očima, ale i hmatem.

# DŮM KERAMICKÉ FANTAZIE

**KAY APLINOVÁ, SKOTSKÁ VÝTVARNICE, OZDOBILA SVŮJ DOMOV DESETI TISÍCI DLAŽDIČEK NEJRŮZNĚJŠÍCH TVARŮ**



Svůj dům v Brightonu si výtvarnice Kay Aplinová pořídila před jedenácti lety. Původně to byl domek zcela klasický, ale postupně z něj vytvořila originální artefakt, na němž uplatnila tisíce a tisíce nejrůznějších obkladaček. Všechny je vytvořila sama, ručně, některé zbyly z jejích zakázek, jiné vymýšlela a komponovala podle toho, o co si interiér, fasáda či zahrada samy řekly.







Uplatňovat je na svém domě začala postupně – nejprve vznikla jedna zeď a výtvarnice nepočítala s tím, že postupně ozdobí všechny prostory, kterých není málo, dům má devět pokojů, ozdobena je kuchyně i koupelna, fasáda i zahrada. „Dnes je pro mne můj dům taková keramická země fantazie,“ říká Kay. „Přemýšleli jsme s mým partnerem, hudebníkem Josephem Youngem, že z něj uděláme muzeum, ale nechtěli jsme ho opustit. Tak v něm žijeme, ale zároveň umožňujeme zájemcům prohlídky. Za rok máme i dva tisíce návštěvníků, naše domácnost je vlastně takovým otevřeným výstavním prostorem.“

A kdo nemá zrovna cestu do Skotska, může si dům i tvorbu Kay Aplinové prohlédnout na [www.theceramichouse.co.uk](http://www.theceramichouse.co.uk).







Kay Aplin at the Asturias gateway - Photo Jim Holden

## THE CERAMIC HOUSE

KAY APLIN

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THE CERAMIC HOUSE is the creation of architectural ceramicist Kay Aplin, who has transformed her home into a living work of art and much more besides...

The Ceramic House is no ordinary dwelling. It is a personal story reflecting Kay Aplin's taste in art and her desire to be surrounded by beautiful things, a philosophy that extends from the objects in her collection through to the house itself, which is a living artwork. Since 2010, Kay has been gradually covering surfaces throughout her home and garden with extraordinary tiled installations, creating a rich, tactile, fantastical space.

Kay trained as a public artist, graduating from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 1995, and has spent over twenty years creating site-specific commissions for the public realm, working predominantly in architectural ceramics. Often her work is sited in remote places and, for many, only viewable in photographic form. By creating a showcase of her work in her home, she is offering the opportunity to see, touch and feel her creations in a domestic context, as she places much value on the sensory experience of her trademark relief tiles. Many of the installations at The Ceramic House have been made using leftover tiles from Kay's commissions; in other cases, she has recreated new versions of existing work. Each feature is named after the original, imbuing each piece with a story.

The decision to open The Ceramic House in 2011 as part of Artists Open Houses (www.aoh.org) quickly propelled Kay and her ambitions into the public domain and in 2013 it was voted Best House through a public poll of 250 houses. This led to a new sideline in curating, which Kay has embraced with great zeal, and for seven years she has been curating exhibitions of



In Camera Gallery, Made in Korea exhibition 2017 - Photo Bernard G. Mills



Living Room, The Ceramic House, Made in Korea exhibition 2017 - Photo Bernard G. Mills

the highest standard of international contemporary ceramics within this unusual setting. Initially inviting artists personally known to her, the scope and ambition of exhibitions has grown in parallel with the spread of tiled features throughout the space.

Over the years, The Ceramic House has evolved into a multifaceted project. Kay has dabbled in events such as workshops, performance nights and a pop-up restaurant. It has been gaining popularity as a guesthouse, offering unique accommodation to visitors from around the globe since 2012, and more recently has become a residency for artists, heralding a new, exciting direction which is currently under expansion.

In 2014, Fantastic Tales: Danish Contemporary Ceramics marked a turning point with the first themed exhibition, and since then she has enjoyed developing increasingly wide-ranging projects and inviting world-class artists to participate in something slightly out of the ordinary. The exhibitions always showcase a mix of established and emerging artists and one of the aspects Kay particularly enjoys is seeking new artists for each show and planning future projects. She has a list of proposals that could extend indefinitely. Early headline artists included Paul Scott and Sandy Brown, and in 2015, Dark Light featured ten artists from five continents working in black and white, including Priscilla Mouritzen.

In 2016, Kay joined forces with sound artist Joseph Young to develop an ongoing collaboration exploring the intersection between sound art and ceramic practice. They opened a new project space, In Camera (www.incameragallery.uk), providing a hub for this innovative dialogue between craft and digital art, alongside an ambitious programme of international residencies, exhibitions, publications, film and performance events.

In A Shetland Landscape, Kay and Joseph's joint exhibition at Shetland Museum and Archives, became the starting point for the 2016 project Landscape: Islands, an exploration in ceramics and sound which took place in various cities in the UK over 14 months. As part of this they initiated the first Ceramic House residency with two pairs of international ceramic and sound artists collaborating in response to landscape, in partnership with Phoenix Brighton (www.phoenix-brighton.org). An exhibition of the resulting works was part of Brighton Digital Festival that year.

Made in Korea, a cultural exchange between the UK and Korea in 2017, is the most ambitious Ceramic House project to date. A ground-breaking exhibition of Korean ceramics transferred from The Ceramic House to a leading London gallery, Sladmore Contemporary, an exciting new step for developing projects in partnership with more established venues. This was followed by a residency for two emerging Korean artists, with their work exhibited at British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) alongside a new piece by Kay and a four-channel sound installation by Joseph. Additionally, Joseph co-curated a GPS-triggered sound walk in partnership with Korean sound artist Hankil Ryu, featuring works by UK and Korean artists, which was launched at BCB and Mullae Arts Factory, Seoul.

2018 will be a period of expansion and development for Kay and Joseph. Their plans for The Ceramic House include a new programme of self-directed residencies and branching out into new international territories.

Ed.



Portuguese bathroom - Photo Kay Aplin



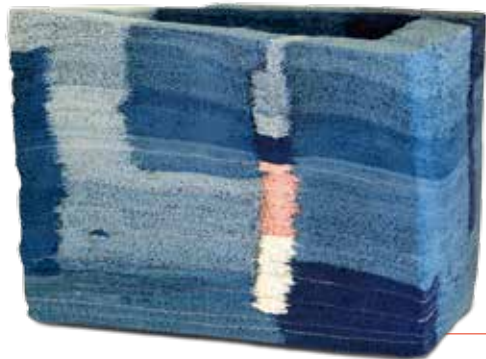
Llandbadach Facade and Gorseinon Wall Reliefs - stoneware relief tiles  
Photo Jim Holden



The Ceramic House hall view - Photo Kay Aplin



# Korea and Britain – a cultural exchange



*Made in Korea*, an ambitious international multimedia project combining sound and ceramics, tours to Stoke-on-Trent this autumn as part of the *British Ceramics Biennial*

The *Made in Korea* initiative consists of an exhibition and residency programme between the UK and Korea, supported by the British Council as part of the UK–Korea Cultural Season 2017–2018.

Originating in Brighton at the award-winning pop-up gallery space The Ceramic House – located in ceramist Kay Aplin's home as part of *Artists Open Houses* at the *Brighton Festival* – it then transferred to the Sladmore Contemporary gallery in London, and will be at Stoke-on-Trent as part of the *British Ceramics Biennial* (see page 28) before moving on to Seoul in November.

With 20 artists from Korea, five from the UK, and encompassing four exhibitions, four concerts, an international residency, and the launch of a unique audio guide, *Made in Korea* is the seventh and most ambitious Ceramic House project to date. It continues the investigation into collaborative sound art and ceramic practice initiated by Aplin and sound artist Joseph Young with their 2016 project *Landscape: Islands*, including establishing the In Camera Gallery, a project space for furthering cross-disciplinary collaborations between ceramics and sound.

'The phrase "made in Korea" could be seen as synonymous with the mass production of ephemeral objects,' explains Aplin. 'But Korean ceramic tradition stretches back several millennia and the artists featured throughout this project reinterpret and rework this historic legacy, exploring the tension between handmade and industrial techniques.'

## BRITISH CERAMICS BIENNIAL

Two Korean ceramists, Kyung Won Baek and Jin Kim, undertook a residency at The Ceramic House from May to June 2017. The work they created will be exhibited at BCB, alongside a new body of work by Aplin reflecting on her research trip to Korea in 2016. The Koreans' work responds directly to the ceramic manufacturing traditions of Wedgwood in Stoke-on-Trent and the historic traditions of female labour, while Aplin, who specialises in architectural ceramics, has made work that takes its inspiration from the form and texture of traditional Korean roof tiles.

The two installations evoke a cultural conversation between UK and Korean ceramic traditions. They are linked by a four-channel sound installation by Joseph Young, composed of the noises of both handmaking

processes recorded in artists' studios in Korea and of automated ceramic production in the factories of Stoke-on-Trent, creating a multi-layered soundscape. All of the artists' work will be displayed together at the former Spode Factory in Stoke.

## SOUND AND PUBLIC SPACE

Additionally, three Korean and three UK sound artists will engage in a sonic dialogue curated by Joseph Young. The sound works will reference ceramic manufacturing processes in the UK and Korea and feature on a geo-location audio app, with the sounds discoverable via GPS at iconic locations in Stoke-on-Trent and Seoul.

The app launches at BCB in September, offering visitors a unique, interactive audio experience of Stoke and its historic manufacturing legacy. In partnership with Seoul-based sound artist and curator Hankil Ryu, the app will then debut in Seoul in November as part of the *Resonance Festival* at Mullae Art Factory, accompanied by an exhibition of Aplin's Korean-inspired ceramics. 

For more details, visit [theceramichouse.co.uk](http://theceramichouse.co.uk) and [kayaplin.com](http://kayaplin.com)

*Made in Korea* will be at this year's British Ceramics Biennial, 23 Sept–5 Nov, [britishceramicsbiennial.com](http://britishceramicsbiennial.com), before moving to Mullae Art Factory, Seoul, 4–12 Nov

**ABOVE:** Jongjin Park, *Artistic Stratum C4/IWP4*, 2015, sheets of tissue paper, porcelain with colour stain  
**RIGHT:** Wook Jae Maeng, *A Large Family No.1*, 2014, porcelain

