



Kate Haywood

The Language of Clay




Kate Haywood

The Language of Clay

Traces





Contents

- 04 Traces
by Ceri Jones
- 10 Permanent Shadows
by Sharon Blakey
- 18 In conversation with Kate Haywood
by Ceri Jones
- 24 Biography
- 28 Acknowledgements

Traces

Kate's work has a simple beauty that belies the dynamic and complex nature of her practice. Constantly moving and developing, Kate's practice absorbs myriad influences and references. The alchemy is in how Kate distils so much of this into individual pieces of work.

'I like the simplicity of forms' Kate says.

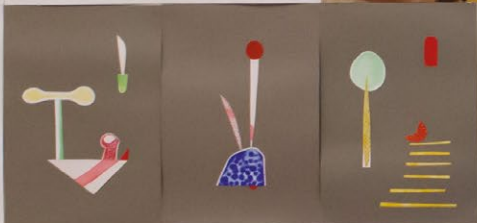
It is this focus on form that gives Kate the discipline to condense many stimuli into singular ceramic sculptures.

Kate has an affinity with objects. She reads them as we might do a book. She recognises that they might have histories. She considers whether their creation has taken a natural or mechanical course, where the objects might have travelled geographically or whose hands might have held or used them. Objects from the past might have lost their original function or perhaps their purpose has changed along the way. Kate notices the immediate environment of an object and also thinks about its cultural environment, whether it affects its surroundings or whether it's been displaced perhaps.

Such a critical appreciation of objects is driven primarily by an aesthetic response to their forms. Though once a particular object piques Kate's curiosity then she'll research it further. Scouring museum collections is a particular pleasure for Kate, uncovering objects' stories and identifying the links between objects, people and places; past and present.

Kate brings professional experience as a jeweller to bear on her ceramic practice, together with years exploring her craft in various studios and creative environments. Concentrating on working with porcelain during her Ceramics MA has given Kate a palette that she now uses with sensitivity and dexterity. She throws, models, carves, moulds, polishes and plies porcelain into the most enchanting of forms.









Her pieces have their own language. They are not made as copies of found objects but are made through a learned knowledge of other objects. Their making is informed by Kate's sensitivity to objects, to materials and to a sense of place. A single porcelain piece may evoke a ritual that is centuries old, it may reference a toy held dear decades ago or an instrument used to measure something last season.

Incorporating other materials, such as hand-made braids, felt or silver adds to how we read Kate's sculptures. The addition of felt brings softness, cushioning or cradling the precious ceramic. The use of threads can make the ceramic wearable, as an adornment or referencing a ceremonial use perhaps. The introduction of silver can elevate the perceived status of an artefact, illuminating its form.

Kate is interested in how different ideas are shared and translated. She is interested in how knowledge is learnt and passed on. In this new body of work she is exploring how objects can express ideas and how objects can both contain and convey knowledge. Kate refers to the objects that inspire her as 'poetic objects.' These are objects that have lost their original function or that have been requisitioned for a different purpose or that simply remind us of other things.

Kate's work stirs different memories in different people, it provokes unexpected conversations and can be understood in a variety of ways. Our personal responses to it will bring our own histories and points of reference to bear. Whatever these might be, I would assert that Kate's work is quite simply beautiful.

Ceri Jones





Permanent Shadows

"Sometimes, when lightning passes through objects and then through human tissue, it imprints the object onto a hand, an arm, a belly – leaving a permanent shadow." Anne Michaels, Fugitive Pieces

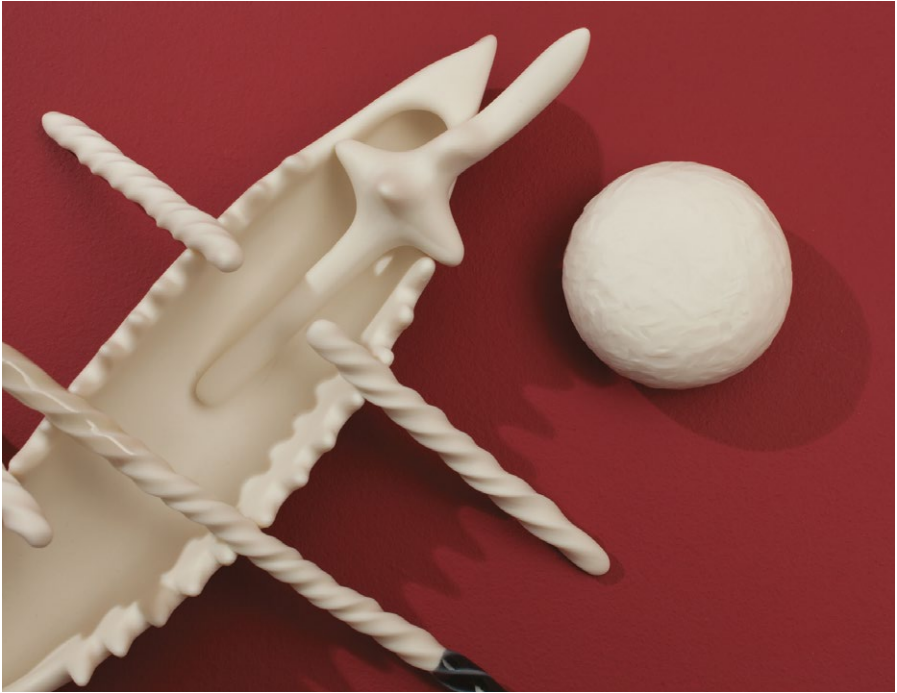
Haywood's sculptural works may appear strangely familiar. You may sense the form of a horn drinking cup; a colour palette resonant of Elizabethan tapestries; the ancient games of India and the Orient as if still in play. The walls and surfaces upon which her work is placed reverberate with the shadows of human things – from everyday life, amusement or ceremony. It is as if their maker has travelled through time at lightning speed, shifting shape from West to East; staining her skin with these traces, writing her objects in their language.

Haywood thinks through materials. Her objects are made at the edge of her consciousness, in the hazy place where fiction and truth collide. A place where knowledge must be lost to be found; where words are inadequate and meaning is best conveyed in material form. Here, faint silhouettes gradually sharpen through her making process. An overlaying of artefact, material, people, time and place; forming the fictional things that are in their own turn, true. Pure, white, blinding.

Her objects are the scale of the body, yet they are not made to wear or use. You meet them as you would encounter a person; face on, at arm's length. Hand size, individual units appear portable, yet they are placed in semi-permanent arrangement. Hung from cords, groupings suggest a counterbalance, measuring perhaps a bodily dialogue between maker, material and process. Haywood reminds us that language can be physical, that the first alphabets were made in stone and the earliest books, clay. That making shaped knowledge.









The spaces around, beside and between her objects must be navigated and read as an essential part of the work. In those small margins a continent might be leapt, 500 years spanned. Looked upon, rows of objects suggest a poetic syntax; from above, carefully laid aerial plans. Each form acts as a wayfinder to the next. Her schemas reveal patterns of thought that disrupt habitual ways of seeing the world. In short, she provides us with tokens to think with, through and about (Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind*), the plasticity of clay shaping her mind and ours.

Haywood's lexicon encompasses materials other than clay and her processes extend beyond those of the potter. Her use of the wheel is surprising, a secret given away through the soft edges that bear the distinctive burr of tool on clay in centrifugal action. Her methods are revelatory, cutting away near solid forms to divulge them anew. Symmetry is undone from face to reverse; thrown forms are sliced and unfurled to create deceitfully linear rods of clay. Her material selection appears weighty in symbolism; linen, a thread of domestic servitude, silver and gold the domain of kings. In previous works, colour was derived

not from the potter's palette of glaze, but from the heritage craft of passementerie: the twisting together of multi-coloured yarns to produce cords that physically and metaphorically bind. These nestle within the deep recesses of meticulously carved surfaces which, 'serve not as ornament but rather to give depth to the shadows' from whence they are produced (Junchiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*).

This new work sees a return to glaze through the subtle hues of blue grey celadons. Black porcelain is brought into opposition with the purity of white, echoing perhaps the strategic manoeuvres of the chess board. Plaything or weapon? Her palette charms to disarm. Also evident are the gilded, reticulated and granulated surfaces more associated with metal working. Paradoxically curious, Haywood refuses to be placed. Like the ceramicist Gillian Lowndes, her methods challenge convention: yet her cultural appreciation has much in common with the jeweller Johanna Dahm; her careful curation akin to the presentation of Simone Ten Hompel's metal works. Maker, artist, ceramicist, jeweller – all at once, or none. Haywood operates in the shadowlands.

She continues to build her vocabulary; an evolving refrain between maker, material and process. Jeweller turned ceramicist, contemporary practitioner utilising heritage craft skill, voracious researcher, museum dweller, collaborator. She has scorched the field, leaving an already indelible mark. So, as you encounter her work; look slowly – absorb. Allow her objects to permeate your skin and imprint a permanent shadow.

Sharon Blakey

Senior lecturer, Manchester School of Art











In conversation with Kate Haywood

Talking with Kate, curator Ceri Jones explores some of the threads that feed into Kate's practice.

CJ: You bring many different references to bear on your work. Do you make knowing that people will have their own points of reference when they see your work?

KH: Yes. Everyone comes to my work with particular knowledge so it's interesting to see how people read the objects. People respond to and understand them quite differently; the work often triggers particular memories for people. Then conversations are triggered, conversations that you might not usually have. Objects have a real power to make links for people. Links to the past, links to memory, to specific moments, to other individuals, to places or, sometimes, to a sense of something.

CJ: Your new body of work doesn't simply stem from one body of research, does it?

KH: All my previous research projects stay in my mind, so in making each new piece of work I recognise that I draw on a myriad of visual references and sensibilities. All of the imagery from past

encounters with objects remains with me. Everything weaves together and informs the next piece of work.

I enjoy examining objects and I'm always looking at what makes up my environment, both the immediate physical space and what makes our cultural environment. I've researched a diversity of objects for this new work, including weaponry, bygone objects, toys, games, objects that contain and pass on knowledge, ritual objects. With a lot of the objects their function has now been lost, such as the clay tokens or the ceremonial drums. This brings ambiguity; they become poetic objects.

CJ: What's the museum collection that you've most enjoyed studying?

KH: The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. The diversity of the collection is wonderful. The curation is based on object types, rather than on geographical locations or specialist subjects. The sheer density of the objects is breath-taking. I enjoy discovering something new every time I visit. Also, the Barnes Collection in Pennsylvania. This is a collection that brings together both paintings and artefacts, it's very discerning in its placement of pieces, so you're



presented with particular objects set against selected images. The value judgements made by the collector still intrigue me, I really like the way that any presumed hierarchy of things has been disrupted.

CJ: Is it always the object alone that you're drawn to or is it a sense of narrative, of the object's history?

KH: I am initially drawn to specific objects intuitively and I would hope that's how people might respond to my work, intuitively, to have an immediate physical response to it. Once I'm curious about an object then I would want to find out more about it, of course, to learn where it's come from and how it's been used.

I'm attracted to different cultures, I'm interested in how our cultural environments are constructed, so I find I'm drawn to an eclectic range of objects. The scale of something doesn't necessarily reflect in my memory of it, it's the form or texture that remains with me and so the scale isn't always translated into my finished pieces. This can have a slightly surreal effect sometimes, like Alice in Wonderland disappearing down the rabbit hole; I want people to question what they're seeing.

CJ: Can the history of an object change your mind about how you respond to it, can you be put off an object?

KH: No, not entirely I guess sometimes I've been surprised. Sometimes I suppose I might be drawn to an object because it's beautiful and then could be repulsed by its past function or purpose, in which case I just wouldn't want to have that object around me, in my environment, though I wouldn't mind it being in my thoughts as a reference point, but I wouldn't want to live with it. I still shudder to recall my first encounter with Louise Bourgeois' tapestry heads, they are both repelling and captivating, these contradictions intrigue me.

Objects tend to have a particular feel to them, about how they've been used. They can hold knowledge but without it being physically present.

CJ: You've talked about enjoying the various placement of objects in museum collections, how do you approach the placement of your ceramic pieces?

KH: I use a collage method when assembling works, bringing objects together, placing them individually



in varying arrangements until I find a balance. There can either be an instant balance when you put pieces together or I have to play around with different forms in order to make the combination feel complete. Sometimes one piece frames another, or contains another. Shadows can fall within and outside the pieces and this varies the overall shapes.

Some pieces have a more mechanical feel, such as those thrown on the wheel, so perhaps I'll balance them with a softer element such as a textile. There's instantly a dialogue between them, in how they relate to each other.

CJ: What is it about working with porcelain that you particularly enjoy?

KH: I hadn't fully explored porcelain until my MA. It's actually the most un-clay like of all the clay bodies I've used, so in some ways I find it like a blank canvas, the purity of it, the whiteness. The black porcelain is a new clay body that I'm working with, I like how it's working visually, creating a contrast, I like the density of it and the apparent weight, it looks so solid. Sometimes it appears

as a void or it can create silhouettes. I like the contradiction and contrast between the white and black porcelains.

Up until this show, my work has been made predominantly by throwing but now there's a more equal balance between throwing, carving and modelling. Pieces are thrown and then left to be bone dry before I carve them, it's a reductive process, revealing something from the material. I'm also making hand-pinched forms more. They have a softer feel than those thrown on the wheel. Porcelain is adaptive to my processes.

CJ: There's a keen sense of materiality in your work. How do you go about choosing the other materials that you integrate with your ceramics?

KH: Placing different materials next to the porcelain allows for different readings of the form. I don't design pieces to go together. This piece for example, I wanted to place the hardness of the ceramic against the softness of the felt, so visually one would imagine how that feels, what it would be like to handle. Both materials are intentionally the same colour but very different textures, which



you don't fully appreciate until you're close up to it and discern the surfaces. The shadows of the different materials have different edges too, softer or harder lines.

When I was making the shell-like form I didn't know that I would be using linen to bind the top edge of it afterwards. The process just unravels, it's a question of trying things and seeing what works.

I've been thinking about some of the materials and some of the objects that we used for early trade, such as the cowrie shell. These shells have had two lives, they've had a natural life and then they've been requisitioned and intentionally made into something else. The twisted textile I've used with the form references artefacts from many of the places where that object would have been used, such as the Solomon Islands, Oceania. I'm interested in the cross-over between the cultures and the materials that would have been used and valued.

CJ: Your making processes are meticulous, painstaking even, do you find a rhythm in your processes?

KH: It's not painstaking in a strict laborious way; they're enjoyable, because I'm not repeatedly making the same object over and over again. Every piece I make is different so I'm actively thinking when I'm making and that's then feeding into the following piece. If I find a process tedious then I just don't use it. I guess that's why the work is continually changing because I'm developing fresh ideas through each process. I don't have rules for my making processes, they're always shifting.

CJ: Colour is important to you. How do you go about selecting which colours to introduce to your work?

KH: Initially it's a gut reaction but I'm also very conscious of the connotations that colours bring. Colour will cause different effects in different spaces. The deep blue I work with has a direct reference to classic blue and white porcelain ware. Yellow I find meditative. The colours have to work on very many levels for me to select them. Again, they alter how each piece of work is viewed by people, we all bring our own references to colour as well.





Biography

Kate has a studio in Fireworks in Cardiff. From this supportive and creative base, Kate's interests and activities range far and wide. Drawn to museum collections, studio residencies and diverse development opportunities, Kate embraces a multitude of resources in her ceramic practice.

A recent Project Network residency at the international ceramic research centre in Guldagergaard, Denmark, afforded Kate an environment in which to explore working with different clay bodies and firing techniques. A subsequent residency at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland saw the opportunity for Kate to collaborate with accomplished hot glass artist James Maskrey.

Kate's interest in combining other materials with her ceramic making brings a keen sense of materiality to her work. This, together with a passion for hand-held objects and for re-imagining objects from the past, brings an inimitable aesthetic to her practice.

Working predominantly with porcelain, Kate augments its precious nature through her well-honed skills in throwing, modelling and carving. A graduate of Camberwell College of Arts, Kate also studied MA Ceramics at Cardiff School of Art and Design. Years prior, however, Kate graduated from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design with a BA in Jewellery Design.

This combination of training, research and ongoing development results in a practice rich in references and allusions.

Kate has work in public and private collections including in Manchester Art Gallery; National Glass Centre UK; the International Ceramics Museum in Faenza, Italy; KOCEF (Korea Ceramic Foundation) Collection and the Ceramics Museum in Vallauris, France. Her awards include the Fenton Arts Trust Scholarship and the Future Lights International Ceramics Competition.

Kate's work has been exhibited widely in recent years. Group shows include Nexus: meetings at the edge UK touring exhibition, Shaping the Future international touring exhibition, British Ceramics Biennial FRESH exhibition, Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale Korea. Solo exhibitions include York Art Gallery and Manchester Art Gallery.

www.katehaywood.co.uk







Acknowledgements

Kate would personally like to thank Ceri Jones, Rhian Wyn Stone, Fireworks Clay Studios members, Sharon Blakey, Alex McErlain, Janet Boston, Claire Curneen, Gillian Duffy, Anne Gibbs, Jo Haywood, Margo Schmidt, Janet Seller, Mike Stewart, Robert Stockley. Thanks also to Lauren Heckler, Dewi Tannatt Lloyd, Amanda Roderick and all at Mission Gallery, Philip Hughes and all at Ruthin Craft Centre, Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, Aberystwyth Ceramics Gallery and Arts Council of Wales.

Mission Gallery and Ruthin Craft Centre would like to thank Kate Haywood, Ceri Jones, Sharon Blakey, Alex McErlain and Lauren Heckler; Mission Gallery exhibition and education staff Amanda Roderick, Matthew Otten, Rhian Wyn Stone, Megan Leigh, Kat Ridgway and Paula Richards; RCC exhibition and education staff Philip Hughes, Jane Gerrard, Julie Wern, Joe Jubb, Einir Wyn Jones; Art Works; Lisa Rostron, Rachel Ellis, Stephen Heaton at Lawn; Arts Council of Wales.

Also thanks to our Language of Clay partners, Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre and Aberystwyth Ceramics Gallery.
www.thelanguageofclay.wales

The Language of Clay is curated by Ceri Jones
www.fieldworking.co.uk

Mission Gallery and Ruthin Craft Centre are revenue funded by the Arts Council of Wales. Ruthin Craft Centre is part of Denbighshire County Council. This publication is also available in Welsh.

This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form without written permission from the publishers.

Photography: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd
Design: Lawn Creative, Liverpool
Print: Team Impression, Leeds
Translation: Catherine Lowe

Published by: Mission Gallery and Ruthin Craft Centre
Text © The Authors 2018.
ISBN: 978-1-905865-96-3

Mission Gallery
www.missiongallery.co.uk

Ruthin Craft Centre
www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk



Mission Gallery  Welsh Arts Council Member
Welsh Arts Council Member
Welsh Arts Council Member
Welsh Arts Council Member
Welsh Arts Council Member

Llantarnam Grange  **ABERYSTWYTH**





It's just over three years since I first encountered Kate Haywood's work and I clearly remember the impact of discovering something exceptional. Her work has that ability to draw you in, mesmerise you, raise questions that you feel you can't quite answer but instinctively know hold meaning for you. Her ability to make work that simultaneously has visual, sensual and intellectual attraction is rare and is something to be cherished. Kate is constantly challenging herself to explore new territory and as an audience we must strive to keep up. She is moving the contemporary ceramic field forward in her own unique way, crossing material cultures and provoking thought.

Alex McErlain