
Material Matters

My vision is to produce a commanding new body of work, revealing key developmental aspects of my recent practice and introducing new elements and collections to broaden and extend the themes. My research remains the interconnectedness of nature and culture, rendered through the glazed surface of hand-built ceramics. My relationship with materials is fundamental and profound; underpinning my approach is the challenge of rendering emotional expression through innate material qualities.

Through investigation and experimentation I aim to expand my portfolio. This process involves removing myself from familiar surroundings and studio activity in Cardiff, freeing up my thinking and creativity by venturing into the dramatic and contrasting Cambrian landscapes, experiencing without preconceived ideas, assimilating new influences. This approach, embracing chance and discovery is essential in the context of working non-representationally, allowing a direct and visceral response to the external and internal feel of nature. There is a direct correlation with my approach to ceramic materials: relinquishing control, setting up conditions for reactions to occur, revealing elemental expressive qualities.

Fundamental to this project therefore is the spirit of discovery, to push myself and my working methods with materials to new limits. I have however set certain parameters to ensure exhibition quality work:

Through object form I wish to explore dynamic variation of sculptural structure at the primary making stage by changing from press-moulded to individual hand-built bases. The current Cylinder and Ellipse vessels have an assertive stillness to their symmetry, I wish to contrast this with new forms that confront the viewer, challenging their occupation of space through ambiguity, asymmetry, scale, and energetic lines and planes. Distortion or removal of the familiar vessel form may present opportunities for greater personal expressive, inquisitive and imaginative experiences for audience and maker alike. In addition to coiling, the use of slabs of clay would give this approach to forming the object speed and greater flexibility.

Furthermore, I wish to explore relative and sequential expressions of both subject and materials through series and groups asking how materials and objects talk to each other when juxtaposed. Emotive themes such as seasons and cycles can be revealed through sequential accumulation and dissipation of matter. This approach also potentially reveals processes, opening up my practice to the viewer.

Choice of materials is pivotal. Each clay has a texture all its own, its innate qualities and the way I handle it forms a personal, unique expressive ground for the slips and glazes laid upon its surface. Evolutionary changes to surface composition have influenced the desire to lighten the clay body and I now wish to work with porcelain, engaging the ultimate light surface. Changing clay bodies potentially holds many benefits in aesthetic expression and perception; I anticipate changes in glaze colour response, in turn heralding potential adjustments in glaze make up and application. I currently layer two slips and six glazes on each piece, to understand how these will work on porcelain a series of kiln experiments is required, each one leading like a clue to the next.

Using porcelain offers opportunities to engage with layers of colour and texture through additional qualities of translucency and light. A new challenge can be taken up; balancing the opacity of drier glazes with porcelain's whiteness and capacity to transmit light. I wish to explore the potential for this through suspended or wall mounted panels, potentially taking my practice into new territories, opening it up to wider audiences.