

PAUL WEARING

flux & poise

flux & poise is an exhibition of new work stemming from my Material Matters project, funded by Arts Council of Wales. The body of work exhibited reveals key developments in my practice since July 2019 when resident at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, where I immersed myself in the diverse West Wales landscape.

The project enabled me to make developments in both form and surface by introducing asymmetry and pushing my use of glaze materials and techniques to new levels. Porcelain was introduced as an additional material contrasting with the grogged stoneware I have used for the past two decades.

The inspiration for my hand-built sculptural vessels remains our interrelationship with nature's seasons and cycles. I am drawn to the vessel as symbolic form echoing the built environment and to contrasting textures resulting from energetic forces of growth and decay which interact and transform the sense of order.

Embracing contrasts of control and chance within the glazing process, I render the textured surface through brushed layers of slips and glazes reacting within oxidised firing processes. Varying the thickness of the glaze layers and using selective volatile materials brings surface disruption through blistering, cratering and crawling. Glazing and firing processes are repeated until optimum depth and complexity of surface are achieved.

Paul Wearing

Paul's making is on the move, through landscapes, time, emotional and physical states. His work leans, lifts, erupts and melts. It is evocative and sensual, in its making and its viewing. Paul's experiences inform the physicality of his work and our own predilections will further shape what we experience from it. Paul's making is motivated by how he feels being in the landscape, being part of his surroundings. Whilst his surroundings will have a particular look at a particular moment; be it stormy or calm, bright or brooding, it is his sense of being within that environment that is fundamental to Paul's creative process.

Immersing himself in the landscape and its climate has emotional and physical effects that Paul invests in his creative practice. The volcanic terrain of Lanzarote, the shifting atmospherics of Iceland and the tilting strata of Ceredigion's coastline all resonate in his ceramic forms. So too does the vulnerability of exposure to the elements, the awe of peering upwards from beneath a jagged cliff face or the contemplation of a shimmering horizon.

Movement, light and texture are each key influences for Paul. Even when making figurative work, years previously, there was dynamic movement through the forms, visceral and urgent. That pace has calmed but the dramatization hasn't. The effects created by glazes sliding and venting across the clay bodies of his vessels is intense and striking. They contrast beautifully with the flatter, gradated colours across the elliptical breadth of his vessels. These palettes of clay slips and glazes alter in tone as light moves across them. There is the shifting light of skies captured within them, a natural state of flux that Paul works to evoke.

The honed aesthetics of painters such as Kyffin Williams and Joseph Turner influence Paul. So too do the elegant ceramics of Jennifer Lee and Jack Doherty. The eloquence of these artists, in manifesting natural environments so evocatively, is a tangible inspiration for Paul's practice. Ever present in his studio and a constant, possibly unconscious, resource is his collection of pet rocks; as Paul affectionately refers to them. He curbed his modest collecting some years ago, mindful of pick-pocketing nature. His rocks are not only treasured and widely varied but they also hold experiences for Paul, physical and emotional memories of places and activities. When he's working in his studio, such direct reminders of time spent out in the landscape are affecting for his making.

This particular body of work, *Flux & Poise*, charts a journey through a year of exploration. It reveals something of the process of spending time observing and walking the Ceredigion coast. Activity that had a dramatic effect on Paul's spirit, energising him physically and creatively. This vital experience will continue to filter through Paul's drawing and sculpture into the future. For now, the evolution from wide, elliptical, painterly surfaces to tilting, dark and encrusted forms is a vivid development. Paul's vessels have long been elevated, a definitive trait that gives his work a sense of rising or being lifted. Add to this the shifting angles of his most recent works, particularly those that lean in pairs, and the energy of his vessels is on the move.

Ceri Jones / Curator



photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

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Selected Exhibitions / Showcases

- 2020 Paul Wearing ceramics, Christopher Prout paintings, Bircham Gallery
- 2020 Stoneware Exhibition, Clay College, Stoke on Trent
- 2019 Art of Wales, Oita, Japan
- 2019 David Tress painting, Paul Wearing Ceramics, The Albany Gallery, Cardiff
- 2019 Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- 2018 Relic, Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool
- 2018 Jus de Ceramique, Keramiekcentrum Tiendschuur Tegelen, Netherlands
- 2018 Lasting Impressions, National Craft & Design Gallery, Kilkenny and Ruthin Craft Centre
- 2018 Journey, The Stratford Gallery
- 2018 Virginia Ray and Paul Wearing, New Ashgate Gallery
- 2017 Grassi Messe, Leipzig
- 2017 Tangibles: New work by Martin Pearce, Paul Wearing and Rachel Wood. Contemporary Ceramics, London
- 2017 Y Lle Celf, The National Eisteddfod of Wales, Anglesey
- 2017 Chris Prout – Painting and Paul Wearing – Ceramics, The Albany Gallery, Cardiff
- 2017 Centre of Ceramic Art, York
- 2016–19 Ceramic Art London, Central Saint Martins

Awards & Prizes

- 2019 Arts Council of Wales, Production Grant for creative professionals
- 2017 Arts Council of Wales, Production Grant for creative professionals
- 2014 Arts Council of Wales, Project Grant for individuals
- 2002 Welsh Artist of the Year, Craft Section Prize Winner, Cardiff
- 2001 Arts Council of Wales, Setting Up Grant for Craftspeople

Publications

- 2021 'Elemental relationships', Ceri Jones. Ceramic Review 308, March/April 2021
- 2020 Special Effect Glazes. Bloomfield, L.
- 2017 Surface Decoration. Millward, K.
- 2015 Post-war to Post Modern: A Dictionary of Artists in Wales. Jones, P. W. & Hitchman, I.
- 2015 British Studio Potters' Marks (3rd Ed. Ed. Hazelwood, J.) Yates-Owen, E. & Fournier, R.
- 2005 British Studio Potters' Marks (2nd Ed.) Yates-Owen, E. and Fournier, R.
- 2003 Form: Contemporary Craft in Wales. Wales Arts International

Related Professional Activity

- 2018– Elected Member, Governing Council, Craft Potters Association of Great Britain
- 2016– Selected Member, Craft Potters Association
- 2014 Selector for Axisweb MAstars programme
- 2008–13 Chair, Fireworks Clay Studios, Cardiff
- 2007– Member, Fireworks Clay Studios
- 2000–03 Co-founder, Co-Director & member, Elements Studio and Gallery, Cardiff

Education

- 2003–04 MA Ceramics, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
- 1997–00 BA (Hons) Ceramics, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

flux & poise technical information

Paul Wearing

Clay bodies used

Earthstone Smooth Textured Material – ES20

"ES 20 is a particularly versatile clay which matures between 1180°C – 1280°C and fires off-white. ES 20's low shrinkage means that it is highly resistant to warping, cracking and thermal shock. It is particularly suited to throwing large pieces and the addition of specially selected molochite means that it is also excellent for hand building, slab building and coiling."

Audrey Blackman Porcelain

"Category: Porcelain. Method: throwing, modelling. Colour: white. Texture: Very smooth. Firing range: 1220°C – 1280°C. This porcelain was developed for modelling & throwing using the finest materials available."

(Information from Valentine Clays Ltd. website: www.valentineclays.co.uk)

Making techniques

Feet and bases are either press-moulded or started as pinch pots. Coiling is then the main technique employed. Hand rolled and flattened and joined with the finger and thumb. The first coil is scored as is the base to secure the join but beyond that no further scoring takes place. No slip is used in the joining technique.

The surface is worked with metal and rubber kidneys and often some evidence of the finger and thumb joins is left as a textural ground for the glazing.

Slips

Slips are either 100% porcelain with additions of oxides and commercial stains or 50/50% china clay/ball clay with additions of oxides and commercial stains.

Glazes

Currently, a total of six volcanic glazes containing silicon carbide are used. This is a key material that releases a gas within the firing which bubbles and blisters throughout the molten glaze surface. Each has a different combination of oxides to render a variety of colours and tones.

Four different barium carbonate-based glazes are also used. Two contain lithium carbonate which together with barium enhance the colour response of the mix of oxides added to each glaze.

Three glazes using magnesium carbonate as a main material are also used. This material provides the cracked and crawled surface and each glaze has different oxides in for colour variation.

Additional glazes used are dolomite based and another titanium oxide based.

All slips and glazes are poured into the interior of the work and brushed onto the exterior. The slips and glazes are applied after the bisque firing and all except for one are applied at one time before the oxidised glaze firing. Cones seven and eight are used as heat work guides and the temperature generally registers around 1240°C.

A second glaze firing is usually carried out at around 1000 degrees with a single last barium and lithium glaze application. Multiple re-glaze and re-firing sessions at a range of temperatures can however be carried out until the optimum depth of surface and colour, tone and textural variation and balance is achieved.



photo: Dewi Tannatt Lloyd