

... porcelain, underglaze
 ... 2006, H35cm
Andrew Livingstone
 ... The Deconstruction of
 ... china plates, digital
 ... black, digital flash

projection, 2005, L400cm approx
8 The Deconstruction of Trade (detail)
9 Exterior-Interior, slip-cast earthenware
 and digital decals, H333cm approx



WENDY KERSHAW: FILLING THE MUD WITH TWILIGHT
 WENDY KERSHAW, THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART
 20 FEBRUARY-MARCH 2007

... returned from four months working in China supported by a creative
 ... award from the Scottish Arts Council, Wendy Kershaw, ceramics
 ... of the Glasgow School of Art, presents a delightful exhibition of
 ... inspired by traditional Chinese proverbs and informed
 ... of contemporary China.

... of Glasgow School of Art, Aberdeen, and the Cardiff MA course,
 ... has been developing an intimate style of drawing on delicate
 ... for several years, and when the opportunity arose for her to
 ... in the new Ceramics Work Centre in Jingdezhen, capital city
 ... for a thousand years, she saw it as a chance to progress both
 ... technique, and develop that subtle balance between order and
 ... she admires in Chinese painting and illustration.

... by both the ease and intricacy of the hand-decorated products
 ... Kershaw initially worked on raw local factory wares, mostly large
 ... with a combination of fine scratched drawing and broad
 ... traditional cobalt blue. Access to an immense stock of transfers
 ... other possibilities and an effective relationship developed between
 ... elements within the illustrations.

... Kershaw has presented her illustrated panels as books or small
 ... and throughout this exhibition there is a lightness of touch,
 ... charm more familiar in book illustration than clay, but in
 ... and in a subsequent residency at the Ceramics Workshop in
 ... she increased the scale of the panels and gave more consideration
 ... design and composition.

... which *Benben Has Only One Set of Chopsticks*, the largest piece
 ... the relationship of the panels, the composition of the image,
 ... combination of fine engraving, broad brushwork and applied
 ... resulted in the most effective work. Perhaps this hints at a future
 ... a more substantial contribution from the material qualities of
 ... combination with the current rich vocabulary of drawing.

... Kershaw maintains that there are special benefits of working on a
 ... programme, the self-imposed pressures to make optimum use
 ... the chance to disregard the baggage that often exists
 ... familiar working surroundings, and the lack of any particular
 ... from others on the programme. Adding to that the excellent
 ... facilities and materials available in China, and the high regard that
 ... have for ceramics as a cultural discipline, this particular residency
 ... had a strong impact on this artist.

Wendy Kershaw



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ANDREW LIVINGSTONE: AUTHENTICITY, FAMILIARITY AND REDEFINITION
 THE SWITCH ROOM GALLERY, BELFAST
 24-27 JANUARY 2007

North Belfast's Switch Room Gallery is a raw space in the heart of a regenerating landscape. Perfect for an exhibition that, central to its PhD credentials, claims to examine an untouched area – clay, our relationship with it and video, as a combined language within contemporary ceramics. These elements are central to artist Andrew Livingstone's thesis – *The Authenticity of Clay and its Redefinition within Contemporary Practice; Ceramic Familiarity and its Contribution to Expansion*. While applauding the endeavour, I am not sure that the physical manifestation of the concept fully measures up to his intention, either in the use of material or the means of addressing 'familiarity'.

Two of the pieces *Exterior-Interior* and *The Deconstruction of Trade*, allude to our current status, how we relate to our belongings and surroundings and their ability to muster thoughts, memories, nostalgia, familiarity. The petite gables in *Exterior-Interior* are clad with 'authentic' decal imagery of cringeworthy 1980s embossed wallpaper and a few now infamous Northern Irish sectarian murals. Knowing this turf I wonder how familiar Livingstone is with murals such as Free Derry Wall or Billy Wright's memorial in Portadown. Familiar or not, the original gables still, recurrently, tug at the heartstrings of anyone who identifies with their provenance and insinuation. I responded more positively to the symbolism in the out of focus willow pattern transfers on the plates in *The Deconstruction of Trade* – hopefully a play on our relationship with the objects we surround ourselves with, blurred by familiarity. The imagery changed over a series of cast plates reflecting a story of transition from old familiar ceramic patterns breaking through to a deteriorated but present-day Belfast.

In the accompanying catalogue Joseph McBrinn writes that the 'simple ceramic shapes, in the form of the quotidian, may seem innocuous', but, given their ornamental scale, poor application, splitting transfers, washes of accidental colorant and mismatched joints, the 'practice' and 'message' seemed to get lost, even defused. As seasoned artists, makers and educators we have a duty to express a respect for our materials and processes and to value them. In the words of Samuel Johnson it was 'worth seeing, yes, but not worth going to see'; useful advice here for artists wanting to hone their ceramic skills or those familiar with the sensitive genre of the North's 'troubles'.

Stephen Farnan