

The Applied Art Masterclasses were conceived and directed by Clive Fiddis of the University of Ulster, hosted by Ormeau Baths Gallery and funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. For details of future events see Web [www.ormeaubaths.co.uk](http://www.ormeaubaths.co.uk)

## THE MASTERS IN BELFAST

ORMEAU BATHS GALLERY, BELFAST  
OCTOBER 2007-APRIL 2008

The applied arts in Northern Ireland are bubbling, epitomised by the recent series of masterclasses, which presented some of the finest makers/artists practising within the applied arts in Britain today. Edmund de Waal (right), Hilary Bower, Christopher Zellweger, Maria Hanson, Richard Slee and Rachael Howard brought, quite intimately, personal ways of examining, making, exhibiting and discussing their work within the framework of our current practices. But could this who's who of ceramics, metal and textiles have some impact on a largely innocent but reverently hungry audience?

I attended two of the lectures, those by Slee and de Waal. It is testament to the selection and powers of coercion of Clive Fiddis, director of the masterclasses, that each artist felt able to speak honestly, sharing insights into their relationship with clay. I already had a good understanding of de Waal's work, but a peppered knowledge of Slee. Slee spoke playfully of his tantalising objects that burst with personality and egocentric ambition. We got a real sense of the ceramic history that he feels part of; reliant too, through his iconising of past treasures, workmanship and self-effacing comedic nature.

The programme, which unfolded over the course of four months in Belfast's Ormeau Baths Gallery, has set a new bar – a parade of talent, accessible to everyone, to question, quiz and



argue with. Some of the most interesting moments happened off-script, for instance in ramblings on a certain piece of work or the Q&A sessions that ran afterwards. Personally I would have liked there to have been a little more bite present in the lectures, or better still to have been privy to the seminars that occurred behind closed doors in the art college. But there was definitely an added joy in having the lectures on my doorstep, in Belfast.

Along with new entities such as Spacecraft, the masterclasses are acting as a catalyst for deeper understanding and appreciation of the applied arts in Northern Ireland, by introducing itself to new audiences in a very public manner. It is my hope that this series will continue long into the future and grow to its potential, being held up as a beacon of cultural celebration in Ireland and beyond. The impact is already being felt, in the galleries, studios, living rooms and mindsets of our audience.

**Stephen Farnan**

## THANKS FOR...

**THE KICK WHEEL** Many potters who work on the wheel find there is one type, one particular model that suits them best, where there seems to be a flow of energy between body and machine that makes the process appear effortless. For potters over a certain age, this is probably a kick wheel. In the old art school days the wheel was likely to require the thrower to stand and kick a treadle with one foot whilst balancing on the other, trying to maintain speed and poise as well as controlling the swaying clay. As a beginner you did not know that there were other, less demanding machines on which to work. When Dicon Nance and David Leach designed and built the Leach kick wheel in the early 1930s, it was a revelation, the Rolls Royce of machines, especially compared to electric wheels that were noisy with little speed control. The Leach kick wheel took on almost fetishistic significance, becoming a must-have for studio potters setting up workshops, a key indicator of the authentic commitment of the potter. The wheel also soon made it clear if the clay was too hard and required too much kicking, or too soft and so flopped. Later, as more sophisticated electric wheels were developed that were quiet and fitted with controls that were sensitive to low speeds, the kick wheel was put out to grass, left in the corner of

the workshop, a repository for unwanted odds and ends. Electric wheels also offered speed throwing, with far less tired leg muscles. Yet, reluctant to let the kick wheel go, it lurks, slightly dusty but fully functioning although maybe in need of a drop of oil. After working on an electric wheel, in later life Mick Casson returned to the kick wheel, finding it suited a slower, more meditative making process. The kick wheel offers an intimate, symbiotic relationship with the thrower, which, if it develops one set of leg muscles and can stretch the back, offers a uniquely satisfying experience. ☐



### FAKES AND FORGERIES

We may never know the extent of the success Jonathan Broadway, recently convicted for faking the work of Bernard Leach and Lucie Rie. Many of the fakes look, on first sight, highly persuasive but closer consideration reveals them as too too tidy, too meticulous. One round Leach pot covered with iron spotting, an effect Leach did as too contrived and self-conscious. Many of Broadway's creations passed through auction houses and galleries, some traced, others not. In the end, appearance and impressed stamp are only guides to the genuine – they also have to capture the spirit and heart of the maker.

### POTTERS' NEWS



At last, the achievements of **Lucie Rie**, one of the most distinguished potters of the twentieth century has been recognised with the award of a Blue Plaque by English Heritage on her house and pottery in Albion Mews, London W2 (above). The original application was made four years ago and the plaque saying, 'Dame Lucie Rie, 1902-1995 Potter, lived and worked here from 1939 until death' was finally placed in position in February. Congratulations to **Walter Keeler**, one of the artists awarded a Creative Wales Award from Arts Council Wales of £25,000 to enable him to 'take time out to experiment, innovate, and take forward his work'.

**Ian Rylatt**, a potter originally from Lincoln and living in Wales, won second prize in the Sidney Myer Fund International Ceramics Award, organised by Shepperton Art Gallery Australia. The piece, entitled *Concerto for Clayrinet*, after Arnie Shaw 1940s tune, can be dismantled into individual components.

Recent graduate **Claire Palfreyman** has designed and created the Broadcaster of the Award for the BBC's *The Money Programme*.

### FAREWELLS

Indian potter **Nirmala Patwardhan** sadly passed away on the 28 March following a determined fight with cancer. She was aware of, and pleased with, the article about her in Issue 230 in *Ceramic Review* and died with family and friends around her.