



SLIP...

a selection of contemporary approaches to slipware

Gallery 3: 2 April 2011 – 12 June 2011

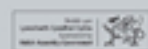
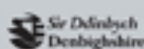


dylan bowen
 prue cooper
 patia davis
 stephen farman
 douglas fitch
 jennifer hall
 annie hewett
 hannah mcandrew
 richard phethean
 john pollex
 jeremy steward
 paul young

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Gallery 2: Norman Makinson 1921–2010 Retrospective 2 April – 11 May 2011



main image: Stephen Farman
 images from left: Annie Hewett, Dylan Bowen, Jennifer Hall

Slip...

Stephen Farnan looks at slipware, and how it fits into his making of pottery.

Tastefully executed or not, there has always existed an aesthetic comedy in slipware, cheekiness nearby; a combination of the makers personality, method of production and the processes lending of immediacy – justified as being 'off the time'. This aspect of slipware is central to my use of it as a way to make pots that interest me, pots that tell a story of my making, now, right now. As a way to decorate, to entertain, a way to mark an occasion, express thoughts and desires in ceramic it has, literally, all the ingredients. Its simplistic aesthetic belies a timely tenderness required through earliest stages of production, and the makers almost exclusively ordinary choice of clay, red earthenware, combined with coloured slips, velvety untainted earthenware glazes, all telling us of a practice, a culture, a raw integrity and a giving nature that is unique too my ceramic of choice, slipware.

Intensity, stress and nervousness exist in much of today's finer studio pottery, often the result of over-thinking, manifested as manicured and stylistic (this would be denied), and unfortunately un-rememberable. The pots that we make, important as they are (or not), do not have to be difficult. The traditional materials, method of production and makers of British slipware, as I know it, have allowed it not to be arrogant, at times bordering on irreverent. When I think 'slipware' (in use) I get a picture in my head of drunken middle England, it's the 18th Century, clunking cups charged with frothy beer, platters laden with ripped crusty bread; I know, another stereotype to chalk up! The thing about slipware is that it knows it's going to be used everyday, hopefully, it knows it's going to chip, worse still be broken and glued, probably, and it knows it's less coveted than it's porcelain/bone china auntie, definitely. It's the funny guy standing in the corner of the classroom, happily, again.

Importantly, slipware still sits within reach, thankfully not escaping its 'humble' appreciation. It can also get away with being completely over-the-top. Think of the late, great, Simon Carroll and his relationship with slipware. His gigantic, show stopping vases, bursting with all the nuance and exaggerated ingenuity of Victorian Britain, but made frenetically on a potter's wheel in the 21st Century, rife with stories of heritage and the maker, showing off simplistic tool marks, processes and ingredients.

I make simple pots, for simple functions, that carry simple messages. Through the use of sgraffito on these painted/slipped pots I chat about things that are happening in my life, whether it is an image of an armed robbery, a dip in the sea off the craggy Tory Island or a Royal engagement; these are pots that hold moments, diary entries, for anyone who fancies reading them. Sometimes the message is simpler, a taste of sarcasm interlaced with a little tongue in cheek. Pots tend to be made and then 'decorated' when I'm in the mood – an indulgence; given that work can become less commercial, dependant on the given 'mood'.

You have to love slipware; otherwise you're at the wrong party! And what a genre to embrace, pots, household objects, that on the whole are honest. Maker and the made neither pristine nor pretty, and happy at it.

