

Preaching to the Birds

Claire Curneen

OliverSearsGallery



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Foreword
Oliver Sears

Preaching to the Birds is Claire Curneen's debut exhibition in the gallery. Eight ceramic works, in porcelain and black stoneware entwine mythological, ancient and baroque themes to create a narrative which the artist continues to explore in contemporary terms.

We see the nymph, Daphne turning into a laurel tree, a half-human bird woman and a figure reclining, as if cast in the lava of Pompeii, but decorated with blue and white glaze, traditional imperial signifiers of wealth. Curneen's figures are laden with historical references and the exquisite textures and striking beauty of the objects echo some of the imposing Catholic iconography of the Renaissance. Much of Curneen's motivation to create these delicate humanesque structures derive from an unending curiosity about the cycle of life. Birth, death and the fragility of human existence between these two events is somehow best brought together in the epic diorama 'Baroque and Berserk' about which Curneen says "Figures jostle with birds, trees, branches and broken pottery; the status quo has been disrupted. Tension arises as the decorative and unadorned, elaborate and raw, all come together in this fragmented reality."



Bird Figure
Porcelain
67 cm H
2017



Preaching to the Birds

Porcelain
56 cm H
2013



Rain
Black Stoneware
45 cm H
2013



Empty Tomb
Porcelain
75 cm H
2018



Daphne
Stoneware
38 cm H
2013



Ancient Plaything

Porcelain
50 cm H
2018



Marrow
Porcelain
55 cm H
2013



Baroque and Berserk

Porcelain
150w x 40h x 40d cm
2017

Claire Curneen

Biography

As one of Ireland's & the UK's foremost ceramic artists Claire Curneen draws us into a world of narrative. Her ceramic figures have an imposing presence which tap into our desires, fears and mysteries. Highly visceral, they reference Catholic imagery from the early Italian Renaissance. Porcelain, terracotta and black stoneware create an exquisite textural finish to these works, with dribbles of glaze and flashes of gold to accentuate their rich qualities. These figures bear bold narratives of human experiences and explore themes around death, rebirth and the sublime, which are both subtle and dramatic.

Curneen graduated from the Crawford School of Art in 1990. She holds a postgraduate in Applied Arts from the University of Ulster Belfast, and an MA in Ceramics from the Cardiff Institute of Higher Education. She is a member of Selected Makers slide index, Crafts Council. London Contemporary Applied Arts, London. International Academy of Ceramics, Geneva. She has featured in numerous international exhibitions, books & periodicals and is the recipient of multiple awards. Her work is included in many private and public collections including National Museum of Wales. Ulster Museum, Belfast. Crafts Council, London. Limerick City Art Gallery. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Arizona State University, USA. Benaki Museum, Athens. Icheon World Ceramic Centre, Korea. National Museum of Scotland. Taipei Ceramics Museum, Taiwan. Kennedy Museum of Art, USA.

Selected Exhibitions

- 2017 *'Tending The Fires'* Collect Open, Saatchi Gallery, London. Awarded the Outstanding Exhibit by the Crafts Council.
- 2015 *'Fragile'* National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
- 2015 *'To This I Put My Name'* Kunstforum Solothurn, Switzerland
- 2013 *'New Blue and White'* Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA
- 2012 *New World: Timeless Vision*, (IAC members exhibition) Santa Fe, & New Mexico Museum of Art, USA
- 2011 *Beaux Arts*, Bath
- 2010 *'Pretty young Things'* Lacoste Gallery, Boston, USA
- 2009 *British Ceramics*. Bavarian Crafts Council, Germany
- 2008 *'Myths and Legends'*, Contemporary Applied Arts, London
- 2005 The International Art & Design Fair, New York,
- 2000 *'Firing Imagination'*, British Council Exhibition, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1998 *Ceramic Series/Claire Curneen*, Aberystwyth Arts Centre
- 1997 *New Work, Claire Curneen*, Ruthin Craft Centre
- 1996 *Philip Eglin and Claire Curneen*, Contemporary Applied Arts, London

Photography: Dewi Tannant Lloyd