

Paul Wearing - Material Matters film transcription - edited.

Hello, welcome to Flux and Poise. The work you see here was made in my studio space at Fireworks Clay Studios, Cardiff, where I've been since 2007.

The main themes of my work continue to be the interconnectedness of nature and culture, or more specifically my relationship with nature; the human condition as nature.

Being based in Cardiff I didn't realise quite how much the built environment was influencing my work, until I spent time in Aberystwyth and in the landscape of West Wales, Ceredigion. The landscape itself influenced the work and the ideas behind the work, primarily in changing the forms I've been working with. So movement within the form became a prominent idea; where I'd been previously making ellipses and cylinders which were very static, symmetrical, calm, I now wanted to bring some sense of movement into the form. So some of the new forms twist and tilt, some have undulating rims or tapered rims, and I think all these explorations and all these changes with the form are my ways of trying to explore that sense of movement that I experienced, that different engagement of my body through and with the landscape. It had a profound effect.

As the project developed and the forms developed, I stopped twisting them and wanted to simplify the form so it related more directly to the ellipse that it had its ancestry in. And so, even though it may flare up into a wider ellipse or tilt to a sideways lean, it still related very strongly to its origins which was within the very static geometric ellipse. The movement therefore slowed down, became a stillness, which is a contradiction, but I think it became a meditation on movement through stillness, or glacial movement, geological movement.

I entitled the project Material Matters because I'd identified that what I wanted to do was develop my relationship with the materials that I work with as well. I make my own glazes and one of the aspects of the project was to push my use of the glazes, my understanding of the materials, what more they can do, because I'd been using the glazes similarly for quite some time. Now, towards the end of the project I'm still using those same glazes but I've gone through a process of testing, using different glazes and layering them in different ways, different thicknesses, different oxides. Just really exploring. So the sense of discovery was a very strong part of the project, to really explore things and experiment with different materials.

The underpinning aspect of my research is evidence of life, those lived moments, which is why I use volatile materials that burst open and freeze in their blistered, cratered, cracked surfaces; they evidence action. I'm still fascinated by ruins and the ruinous surface, but it's not in a maudlin or negative way. I think something interesting happens when presented with say, a decayed ruinous surface, it doesn't necessarily make me think of death, it makes me appreciate life more. And the ceramic surfaces that I work with, for me, talk about impermanence, about change and that's very much about our human experience; our lives are impermanent, our lives are continually changing. What I really enjoyed that about being in the rural landscape and the coastal landscape is that these mountains that seemed so solid and unchangeable, were changing. Change is happening all the time and that fascinates me because I find it so frightening at times.

One of the big things that I'd identified that I wanted to work with and explore within the project was a different clay body. I've worked with a grogged stoneware exclusively for twenty odd years since graduating. I've never worked with porcelain but I was drawn to its whiteness, I wondered how that would affect the quality of the colours of the glazes that I was working with. I was interested in its ability to transmit light through its particles. I wondered about the interplay of the opaque glazes, the dense visceral glazes and how that would work with porcelain. As time went on though my

interest in the luminosity lessened, I became far more interested in its tactile qualities. The smoothness of it I hadn't anticipated at all, it is so seductive to work with and its density is so different from a grogged stoneware body which is very much more open because of the grog and is therefore a courser body. Whereas the particles of porcelain are that much closer together and everything you do to it it remembers and can remain as a mark on the body.

Drawing has been an important part of the project. I started within the first couple of days of being at Aberystwyth Arts Centre on the residency. I wasn't really sure what I was going to be doing and the surprise was the residual dust drawings that I was getting from the charcoal drawings of objects that I was doing with paper pinned to the wall. The charcoal was making a big mess on the floor so I laid paper down to catch that dust, only to be tidy, but what I ended up with are accidental artworks which, for me, are way more expressive. It was such an interesting experience drawing these objects, these kind of fantasy vessels in black charcoal or very basic colour landscape drawings in pastels and the pastel chalk falling to the floor, resting on the paper there. I would pick the paper up and shake, or lift, or tilt and the dust would fall at an angle or at different angles rendering this emotional landscape. It was quite extraordinary. It was accidental but once I realised what was happening I then made choices and decisions about what I was going to do with it so my interaction became more deliberate. I still wanted that element of chance to come into it, to hear the material speaking and know it wasn't necessarily me controlling it. I was controlling what was happening on the wall, not necessarily what was falling to the floor. Again, it was that partnership with materials.

The first drawing I did, I identified as a fantasy journey. It was five objects and in my head what I was exploring was that journey from culture to nature; from my work where it was, to where it may go. But during that drawing's journey I realised I didn't want to make rocks because nature does that. I want to harness nature, I want to reference and talk about my relationship to it but I don't necessarily just want to mimic it.

The exhibition is due to open at Ruthin. It's extremely exciting, it's extremely nerve wracking but I'm really excited to see the work outside of the studio and in the gallery setting. I want to see how people respond to it as well and I think for me, because the forms lean and move, there is that sense of movement that has gone through the project and through the work. I want that to affect the viewer as well; I want the viewing experience to be an active one rather than a passive one. I'd love to see people bending down looking at things from different angles, looking inward, looking round, just engaging. Because I think my previous work was so still, it conjured a stillness and put out a calmness, I'd like these to have an impact that's more dynamic.