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m<sup>2</sup> **Gallery**

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## ***Obsolescence and Renewal*** **Neil Brownsword**

Exhibition runs: 18 November 2018 -13<sup>th</sup> January 2019

Obsolescence and Renewal offers an insight into a body of interconnected works by Neil Brownsword that have evolved over a seven-year period. It reflects upon the ceramic manufacturing histories and aspects of deindustrialisation in Stoke-on-Trent, a ceramic capital that has experienced significant change in recent decades. Through a research process which involves film, the installation of remnants from ceramic production and industrial archaeology, Brownsword explores a critique of globalization and its socio-economic impact on people, place and traditional industry. It examines in particular the complex knowledge systems within ceramic manufacture and their displacement through advanced technology and policies of outsourcing. Brownsword highlights what frequently remain overlooked forms of intelligence within a rapidly disappearing culture of labour, and raises questions surrounding the value of intergenerational skill that has evolved during 300 years of industrialisation.

Brownsword's recent residency at the Victoria and Albert Museum looked towards reimagining early examples of North Staffordshire Chinoiserie, with a particular fascination for the 'slippage' that occurs via this mode of cultural appropriation. Decorative surfaces unique to ceramics production have been digitally extracted from their form via rudimentary scanning technologies that embrace the 'glitch' as a means to transform instead of duplicate. The deconstruction of this history has informed the creation of Brownsword's own pattern book, from which elements have been replicated via traditional modes of production that sustain the practice of marginalised and near redundant industrial craft knowledge.

### **Biography**

*Neil Brownsword is an artist, researcher and educator who holds Professorial positions in ceramics at Bucks New University and University of Bergen, Norway. He holds a PhD from Brunel University and MA in Ceramics and Glass from the Royal College of Art, London. His work is represented in public/private collections internationally, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, Korea Ceramic Foundation, Yingee Ceramic Museum Taiwan and Fu Le International Ceramic Art Museum China. In 2009 he was awarded the inaugural British Ceramic Biennial Award, and the prestigious Grand Prize at the Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale, South Korea in 2015.*

m<sup>2</sup> **Gallery** is a non profit making arts organization promoting the display of art through the m<sup>2</sup>exhibiting space that can be viewed by all visitors to Kings Grove, Peckham, London Se15 2NB. It is administered and curated by the m<sup>2</sup> Gallery committee. Proposals are welcome from all sections of the community who would like to exhibit in the space.

### *Factory, post-industrial discard. 2017*

Brownsword remoulds discarded artefacts involved in the mechanics of ceramic manufacture found violently defaced at numerous post-industrial sites in Stoke-on-Trent. As an act of regeneration, the moulds are subsequently put back into contemporary production yielding an alternative to the systems of uniformity and perfection inherited through Western industrialisation.

### *Six Towns, looped film, 2015/2017.*

*Six Towns* juxtaposes ceramic 'know-how' archived during a period of intense economic restructuring in North Staffordshire's ceramic industry (2003/2004) against a survey of former sites of production (2016). Complexities of human endeavour (many of which are no longer in existence) are sharply contrasted against the entropic forces of nature reclaiming the spaces where livelihoods and communal bonds were once forged.

### *Factory, Performance residue, bone china and lead. 2017*

China flower making is one of the few methods of mass production that relies completely upon the dexterity of the hand, with Rita Floyd being amongst the last of a generation of artisans who retain this skill. Hired to re-enact her former working practices, the rhythmic intricacies of touch evident in Floyd's craft are suddenly disrupted by Brownsword's instruction to discard everything she makes. The waste that accrues becomes a metaphor for the loss of an intangible cultural heritage, and the need to value people and practices displaced by global economics.

### *Relic, post-industrial discard. 2013*

This taxonomy of tools and artefacts salvaged from former sites of ceramic manufacture, offers a glimpse into systems of labour and obscure technologies that remain frequently overlooked. Imbued with traces of labour and absorbed by forces of nature, which through time have come to inadvertently 'decorate' the objects themselves.

### *Salvage Series, Ceramic and industrial archaeology. 2011*

*Salvage Series* is composed of detritus residual from both contemporary and historic ceramic production in Stoke-on-Trent. These 'relics' of factory production aimed to draw attention to a manufacturing tradition rooted in the area for nearly three centuries, that was being displaced by technology and the impact of globalisation.

### *Pattern Book, archival print and gouache. 2018*

During North Staffordshire's early industrialisation, the borrowing and assimilation of cultural forms from East Asia led to significant innovations in ceramic production. In this group of works Brownsword examines this process of the copy, and through rudimentary technologies embraces the digital glitch to echo the 'slippage' that often occurred in these early forms of Chinoiserie. The subsequent analogue production of these works reflects pattern books created by various historic manufactories to catalogue styles and detail the nuances of production knowledge.