

Obsolescence and Renewal

Neil Brownsword

Craft Study Centre, Farnham

September 17, 2024 - February 8, 2025

Externalising the Archive, Bone China, 2021
120cm x 500cm (variable)



Externalising the Archive, (2021)



Externalising the Archive reappraised the cultural value of an endangered collection of historic moulds from the former Spode site. Such by-products are rarely preserved for posterity due to their perceived low value and space required to house them. A survey Stoke-on-Trent City Council undertook when the factory closed recorded in excess of 70,000 moulds within eleven buildings, dating from c.1850 to 2008, and recommended less than 5% be retained. A vast majority of recent moulds - generally regarded to have 'little historic value,' face impending disposal as the site undergoes regeneration. With no inventory, these tools of mass production represent an 'untapped' archive that illuminates both technological developments and stylistic change.



To further elucidate systems of knowledge embodied in the moulds' fabrication, Brownsword cast their natches, feeds and spares using silicone rubber and bone china.



Externalising the Archive, Bone China, 2021

120cm x 500cm (variable)

Artist price £17,000.00











Obsolescence and Renewal (1 & 2), tapestry, wool, cotton and acrylic, 2023





Obsolescence and Renewal (1 & 2), tapestry, wool, cotton and acrylic, 2023



Obsolescence and Renewal (1)

Tapestry, wool, cotton and acrylic, 2023. (80cm x 80cm)

Artist price £8,000.00





Obsolescence and Renewal (2)

Tapestry, wool, cotton and acrylic, 2023. (100cm x 200cm)

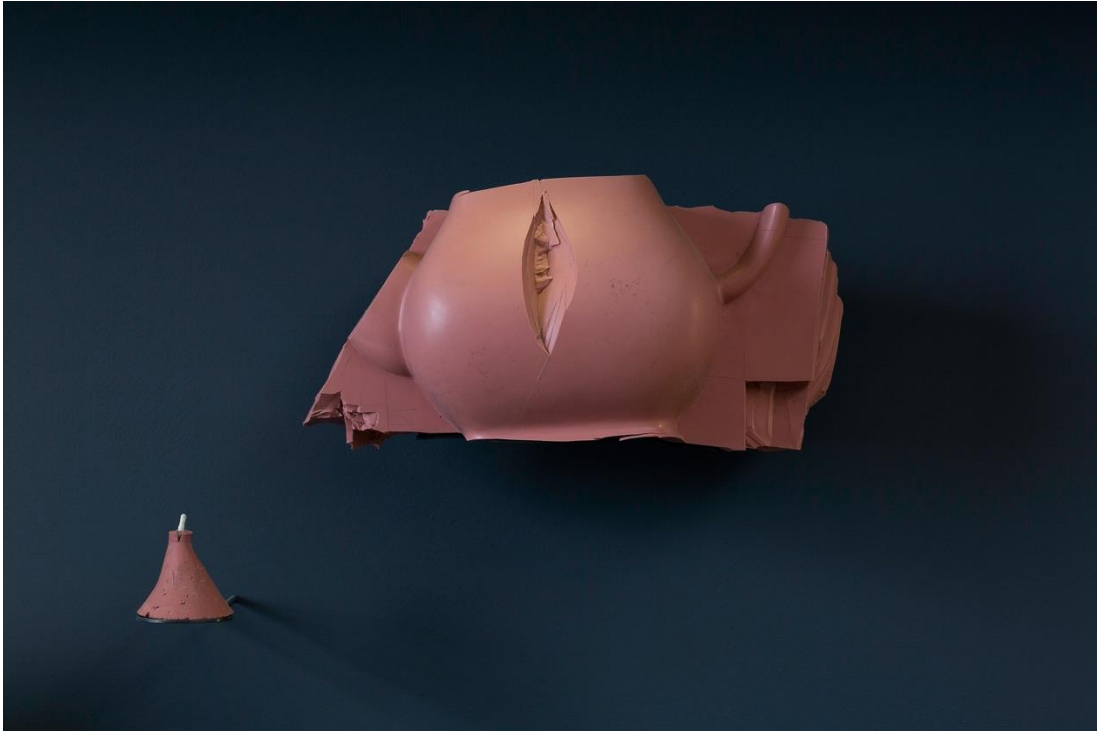
Artist price £12,500.00

Ghost, Bone China, 2023-24 1m 50 x 3 m (variable)

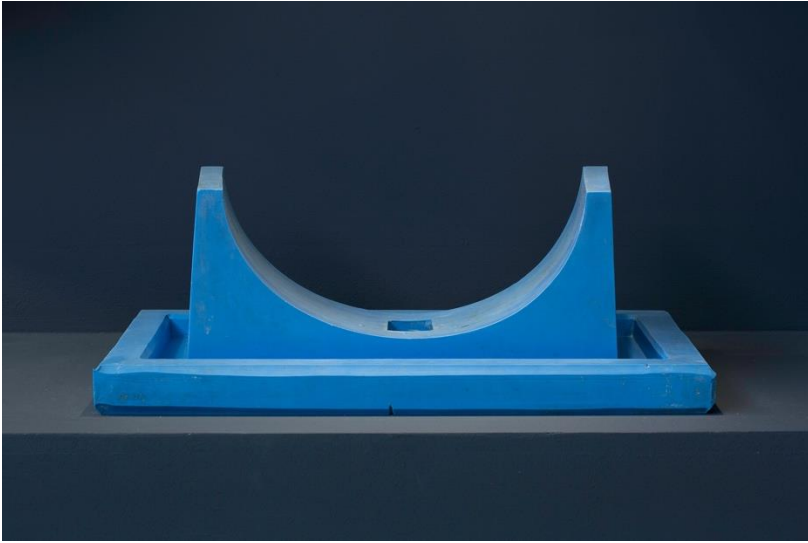




Since 2000, Brownsword's practice has involved the unearthing and appropriation of historic ceramic remnants from past ceramic production in his assemblages, to cite systems of labour integral to product perfection within industrialisation. In light of increased global competition, many historic manufactories in Stoke-on-Trent have in recent decades been unable to sustain UK production costs. Following the downsizing of one such company, Brownsword was granted access to its abandoned site where he salvaged numerous discarded rubber moulds, originally used to create plaster moulds for production. Historically when a factory would become insolvent, design assets such as copper plates and moulds would be absorbed by takeover companies and continued into hybrid forms of production.

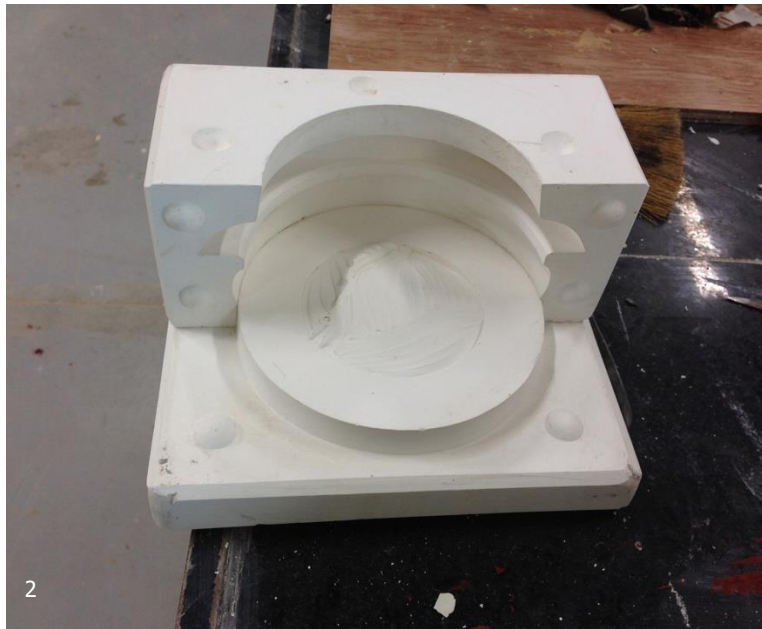


Salvaged from former sites of historic ceramic manufacture, these production remnants were marked by a particular point in time, as prior to the factory's closure such objects faced habitual defacement to deter subsequent reproduction. Drawing parallels to acts of iconoclasm throughout art's history, these objects, stripped of their previously assigned use and context, were given venerable status via their presentation within the valorising mechanisms of the vitrine. As Edensor suggests, objects '*consigned to the status of waste, are not intended to be remembered, and they announce themselves as the objects of unfinished disposal. Yet the absent presences they raise up are vital signs of prior life'... the erosion of singularity through which the object becomes 'un-manufactured' remembers the process by which it was assembled: the materials that were brought together for its fabrication, the skilled labour that routinely utilized an aptitude to make similar things, the machines and tools which were used to shape it*'.



Details of salvaged artefacts involved in the mechanics of ceramic production presented as a series of formal taxonomies. 1. Silicone rubber mould 'back'; 2. defaced silicone rubber mould; 3. defaced silicone rubber case mould; 4. Silicone rubber mould-making residues from mixing bucket; 5. Defaced silicone pads for Murray Curvex printing; 6. Silicone pads for Murray Curvex printing and rubber spare used in mould-making.

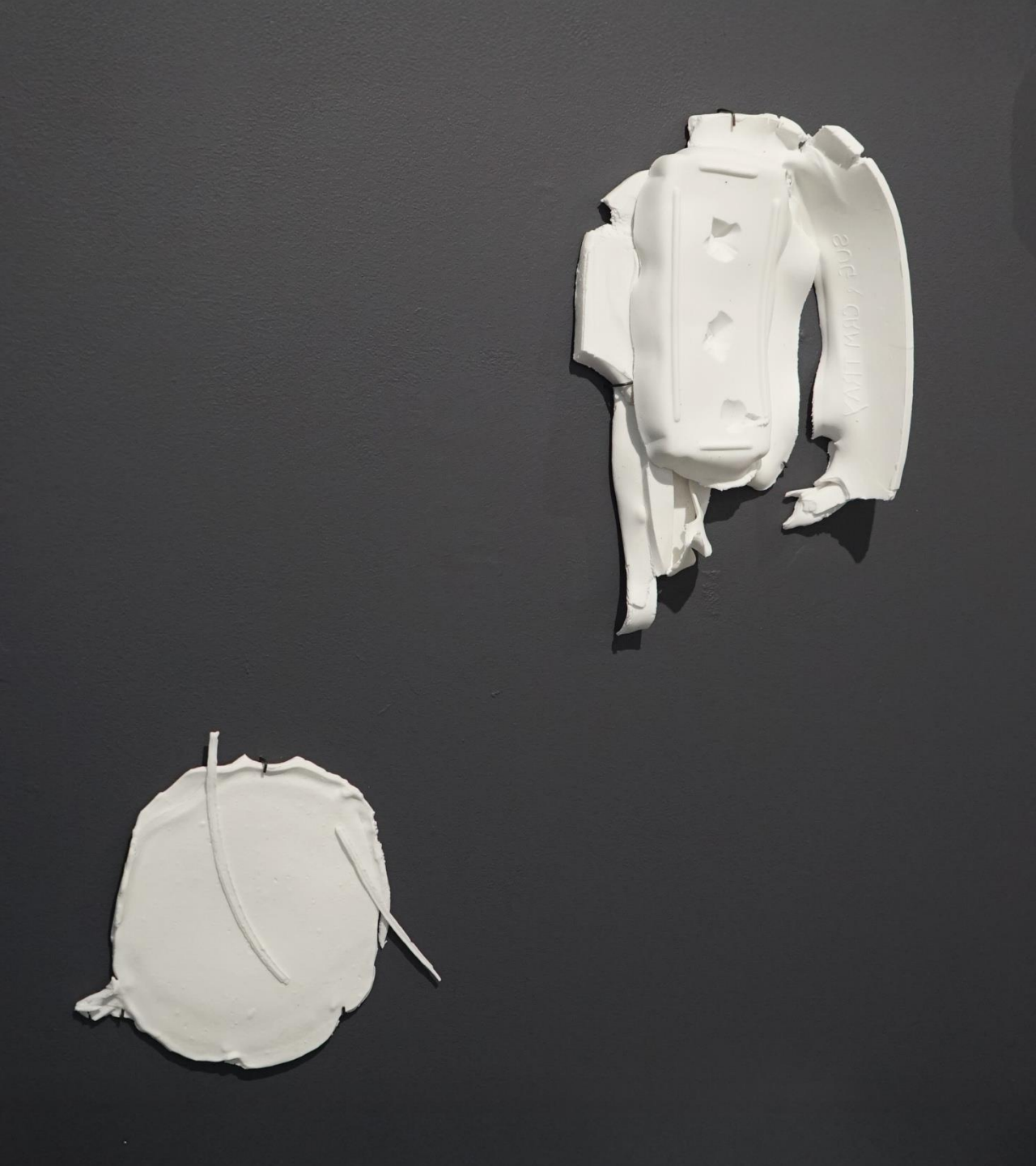
Moulds of post-industrial
discard, cast with bone China







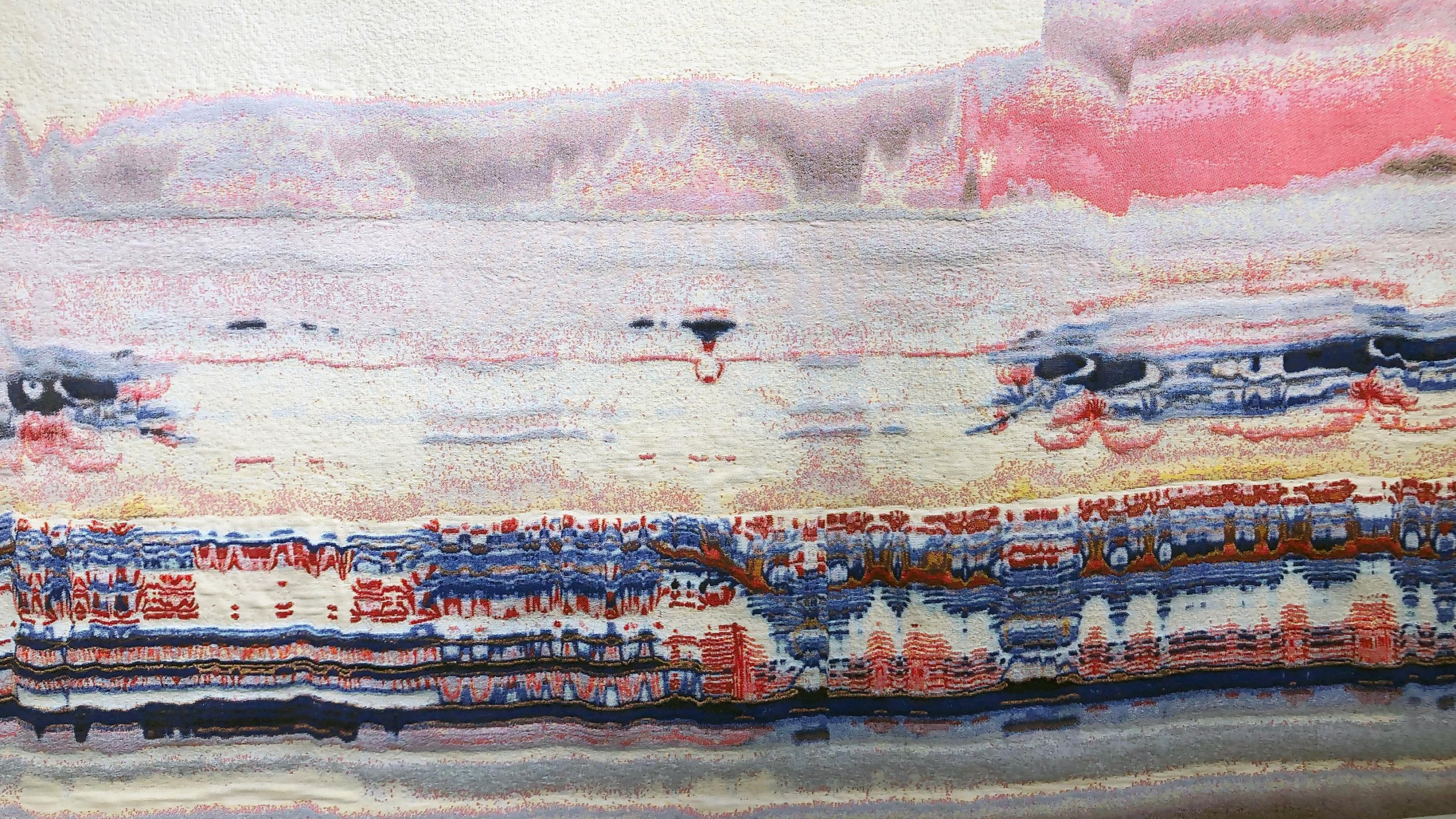




Ghost, (detail) Bone China, 2023-24 1m 50 x 3 m (variable)
Artist price £15,00.00

Chinoiserie Landscape (disrupted), tapestry, wool, cotton and acrylic, 2023
100cm x 300cm





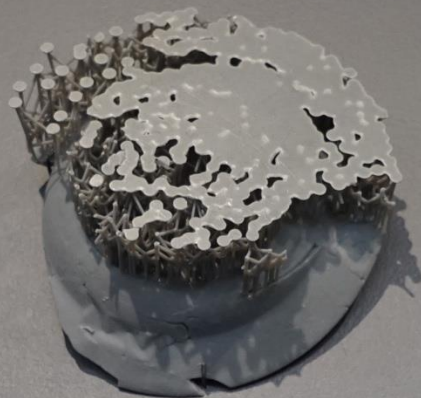


Simulacrum, 3D resin print, 2023
200cm x 200cm





Simulacrum, 3D resin print, 2023
200cm x 200cm
Artist Price £10,000





Curated works from Spode Museum Trust, Brampton Museum & Art Gallery, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery



1 Dish, buff earthenware, octagonal shape with press-moulded and incised slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1450

2 Hump mould, earthenware, used for press-moulding figures
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

3 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

4 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

5 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

6 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

7 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

8 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

9 Teapot, earthenware, bulbous shape with red and black slip decoration
Source: *Southampton Museum*, c. 1700

