

Design

PERSPECTIVE



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Owen Quinlan

Using a soft sea-green glaze that interacts with altered stoneware forms during firing, Owen Quinlan's new work, *Mesh*, perfectly captures a moment in time; that precious moment in the kiln when everything aligns and is forever preserved. It is territory this ceramic artist has previously explored in *Environment to Object*, an earlier body of work created while completing a BA (Honours) Degree at GMIT Centre for the Creative Arts & Media. That series was the culmination of sustained empirical research, which began with an early interest in clay that was fostered at second level, expanded during his BA in Art and Design at GMIT and honed during a two-year Ceramic Skills and Design Training Course in Thomastown, Kilkenny. During this time, a largely scientific approach to making involved throwing multiple repeat forms, rigorous testing and the documentation of results. It also allowed him to build up valuable information that continues to feed into his practice. Exhibited as wall-mounted grids of nine, *Environment to Object* was well received and in 2013 he won the Future Makers Practitioner Award.

Quinlan followed his degree with an MA in Ceramics in Cardiff. Here, a new environment and the somewhat daunting instruction to 'put aside everything you have done up to now' led to the creation of a new series of work where found objects, occurring in a 'less idealized environment' while slowly returning to their natural state, are combined with slips and glazes and fired. The resulting *Animate Object* series, while inhabiting

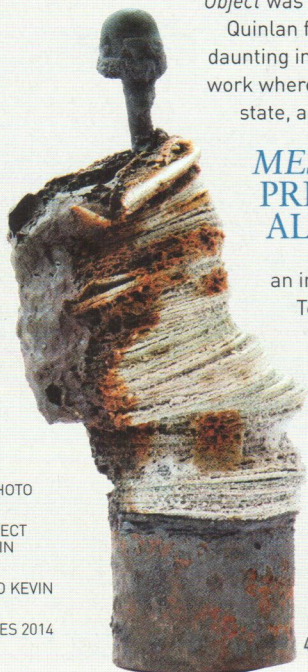
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an industrial sphere, had a sense of familiarity as pieces retained a trace of a previous existence.

Today, as Owen Quinlan's practice continues to develop and expand, elements of both previous series can be seen in *Mesh*, which continues to capture a moment in time but displays an edgier sophistication than previous wall-mounted work. In 2014, Quinlan began showing with SO Fine Art Editions in Dublin. The following year he won the Peter Brennan Pioneering Award.

2016 will see his work shown at a number of international exhibitions most notably 'Heritage and Diversity - East and West Invitational Ceramics Exhibition'. Featuring both European and Korean Ceramic Artists, it takes place at Hanyang University Museum, Seoul from 14-28 April. His work can also be seen in 'Landscape: Islands', a group exhibition curated by J Kay Alpin at The Ceramic House, Brighton between 7-29 May and he has been selected for the Imago Mundi Irish collection, a worldwide project with the objective of gathering and cataloguing a snapshot of global visual art representative of this time. ■

Frances McDonald is an independent writer, curator and project manager, specializing in in craft and design.



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1 MESH (DETAIL) 2016 PHOTO KEVIN GILMORE

2 ENVIRONMENT TO OBJECT SERIES 2015 PHOTO KEVIN GILMORE

3 OWEN QUINLAN PHOTO KEVIN GILMORE

4 ANIMATE OBJECT SERIES 2014 PHOTO KEVIN GILMORE