

Barnaby Hosking

Ceramics

Press package

“Hosking’s new ceramic works flow between notions of the vessel and the body, flatness and form, image and space. Seemingly folded from thin slices of the landscape, impressed upon by the dramatic and random markings of Raku firing techniques, these sculptures defy categorisation and bask in the constant play of possibility and innovation that ceramic art affords”

A Ceramic Story

Born in Norwich in 1976, my journey with clay started at an early age whilst growing up in North Norfolk. Preferring the more active process of making sculpture rather than that of painting and drawing, I quickly took to modelling clay figurative sculpture in a stable at the grounds of my parents’ farmhouse. Early influences were local sculptors working with the figure, then as my art education began, I became drawn to Rodin, Henry Moore and Elizabeth Frink.

Being the only artistic child out of five, I created my own world in the stables, tucked away from the dysfunction of my family. I felt as though it was my purpose to be an artist, but regularly questioned the purpose of making art itself: In particular I began to question the role of modelling, painting or drawing a likeness from life. Rendering a likeness came naturally to me, which I believe was handed down from my mother, who’s great grandfather was an Italian impressionist painter. This curiosity grew stronger throughout my GCSEs, A-levels, Art foundation, Degree and finally an MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London. I felt gifted, but as the digital age dawned, I was often at odds with how and indeed whether to apply my talent.

This conundrum began to unravel during my time at the Royal college of art, as I began to witness the drawing to a close of my art education. At my final exhibition I decided to show a series of video works that romanticised both the process of modelling a clay bust from life and painting a landscape in a field at night. It seemed that I had come full circle: confusion and doubt had transformed into a celebration of the process of observing the world around me, whilst maintaining its inherent mystery and wonder. For this effort, I left art school in 2003 with the two top prizes at the RCA.



Surface. 2003. Digital projection onto black velvet. Installation view. Royal college of art, London

After art school I continued to merge the narratives that arose out of the process of making art (often as part of an expedition or residency) into the presentation of the art work itself in the format of video and sculpture installation.

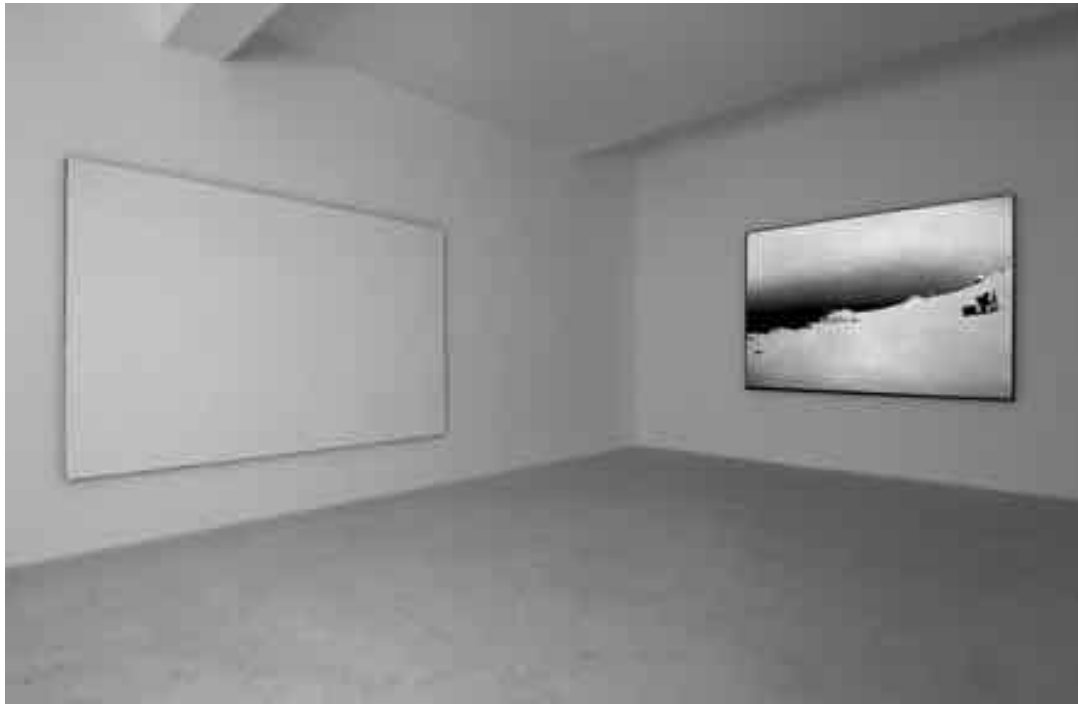


Reclining Figure. Digital video projected onto black velvet with life size bronze sculpture. 2005.

My focus on process and narrative led me to plan expeditions to make my work. “Black Caddy” took me to the ancient tea houses of Kyoto and “Snow Painting” involved driving from London to the most northern point of continental Europe: the island of Nordkapp in Norway.



Black Caddy. 2004. Digital video projection onto black velvet with Lacquered tea caddy



Snow Painting. 2005. Digital video projection onto black canvas, painting and black mirror. Installation view.

In 2015, this continued theme of merging narrative, process and art objects into one cohesive presentation led me to conceive of another expedition: *Spiderland*



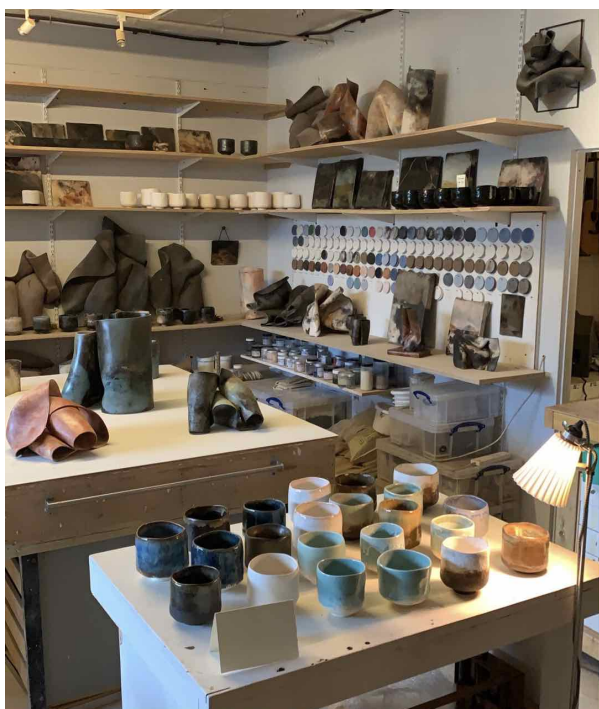
During this residency at Lower Hewood Farm in Dorset, I lived in a yurt in a secluded field making clay sculptures and firing them in a custom made kiln set into the ground. Like previous works, the experience of living and making work in this way informed the sculptures. The resulting video enveloped the residency, process and art object into one atmosphere.



A new direction

Through becoming so intimately involved in the firing process through the making of *Spiderland*, I had unwittingly become a ceramicist. I returned to London to adorn my studio with all the necessary equipment to embark on what would become a six year ongoing obsession with the whole ceramic process.

For me, ceramic art encompasses the perfect balance between process, object, being in nature and a spirit of innovation that has been characteristic of my practice thus far. I have also begun to value the social aspect of working with clay: the sharing of equipment, ideas and techniques which is common within the ceramic community. This led me to open *Ridley Road Ceramic Studio*, a co-working ceramic art studio in the heart of Dalston, East London. It is between here and my rustic barn studio in Barney, North Norfolk that I am gifted with space, open air and the company of other likeminded artists to continue as a ceramic artist today.



Ridley Road Ceramic Studio in Dalston. East London



Taking work out of the metal sagger at my studio in Barney, North Norfolk

From the creation of the custom made paper clay formula to the “Naked” Raku techniques employed in the firing process, the discoveries I have made have reinforced my belief that there is more innovation in the field of ceramics than in any other of the plastic arts. The greater number of stages in production along with the endless array of materials and techniques available, allow one to truly find their own voice within a world of well trodden mediums.



The Experiencer. 2021. Saggar fired Paper clay. 37 x 41 x 32cm

Process

Starting with a large slab of clay, which handles similarly to a very heavy fabric, the sculpture manifests through my spontaneous curling, lifting and folding of the clay. My hands are guided by an appreciation of bodily forms, intertwined with and continuing into each other in a flowing movement. There appears an element of Pareidolia; the psychological phenomenon that causes some people to see or hear an image or sound as something significant. Within these folds of clay can be seen a couple spooning, a reclining figure; each composition manifesting through the performance of the clays handling as new ambiguities within the form are discovered. The fabric-like folds of clay can be seen as alternately covering or revealing the body, resulting in forms that are both open like a vessel and enclosed like the body. The movement created is a continuous play between two and three dimensional form; as the flat clay slabs imprinted by natural landscape-like compositions, folds and contorts into vessel-like bodily forms.

For the surface, I use Terra Sigillata. This is a thin polished clay coating, originally developed by Ancient Greek potters, which gives a skin-like sheen and retains more of the original qualities of the clay than glaze. The smooth but porous surface then absorbs the myriad effects of the final stage of the process: Naked Raku firing, which involves handing the sculpture over to completely random surface marking.



Crutch. 2021. Saggar fired paper clay. 43 x 34 x 34cm.



Uplifting Spoon. 2022. Saggar Fired Paper clay. 35 x 63 x 36cm



Pink landscape vase. 2018. Saggar fired paper clay. 18 x 40cm



The death of reading. 2019. Saggar fired paper clay. 22 x 29 x 5cm

Kintsugi

The process of Raku firing can result in breakages, which I celebrate as part of the history of the sculpture by using the Kintsugi method of embellishing cracks with gold.



Modesty. 2022. Saggar fired paper clay. 42 x 50 x 30cm



The death of landscape. 2019. Saggar fired paper clay. 33 x 43 x 5cm