



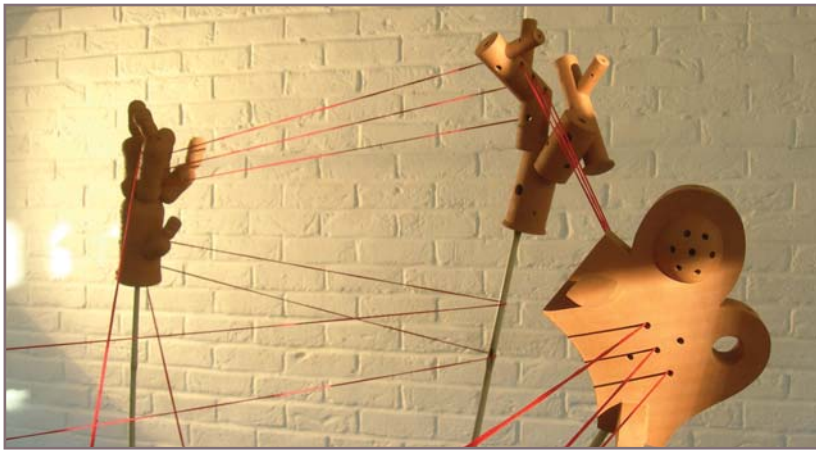
Simon Fell

ceramics

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Tension extension
earthenware
6 units each approx
30cm h

Statement

Did God give us hands just so we could rattle a keyboard?

I work with clay because I find it is a very plastic and constructive material which responds to my touch and to my ideas, I draw for the same reasons. Working directly with your hands is becoming a rare experience and it is clear to me that it is a valuable one. Having the time to build up manual skills is now as likely to be part of your leisure time as your work.

My clay work and my drawing are both figurative and symbolic. I choose my subjects through a process based on filtering observations through my accrued experience. Some of the imagery I use is linked to my identity as a man and my boyhood - cars, machines and guns are recurring images. During my lifetime the idea of what it means to be a man has changed and continues to do so gradually and incrementally, these shifts in roles are a rich source of inspiration.

My ideas come instinctively and flow in an associative way from one to another. In this sense my work has a life of its own, I need to make it, it needs to be made. Each project that I make has grown through a sequence of observation, collection of ideas and references, drawing and building in clay. Ideas come in their own time, I take notes, sketch whenever I can and collect images in my sketchbook, on my camera and in my memory. The process used to be fixed when the work was fired, now I have adopted variable ways to display and publish the work (installations, website, online video) even the end product has now become flexible to some degree.

I work in ceramics and drawing and also have skills in computer graphics. Although I do not currently use computers directly in my art work the combination of ancient and modern techniques is one of the things that interests me. I also like the way my work comes about. It didn't always seem so clear to me what to make and why. That discovery has taken me some time so now I really feel a sense of conviction about what I do make. I have had to learn to trust my imagination to provide a stream of ideas that I can experiment with and develop.

Themes

I explore themes such as the cars series over a period of time in different configurations and contexts. I developed the still-life as a three dimensional motif in my early work and various forms of installation now make up the bulk of my sculptural output.

Although I have largely stopped making vessels I find it is a persistent and recurring concept which is universally understood. The medium and it's history inevitably create echoes and references in the things I make and I draw on this repeatedly. My work is modern, it's part of my life in the 21st century but it is also part of the continuum that ceramics represent.

Techniques

I hand build in earthenware (and occasionally stoneware) to make my sculptures. I use a variety of hand modelling, slab building and press moulding techniques and some dragging methods for rims, edges, handles and other finishing touches.

The technical limitations of working in clay are both a challenge and a source of guidance and inspiration, working within the constraints of this medium forces ideas and technical solutions to come to the surface. I am not averse to including other materials in my work but clay remains the most satisfying and the core material for me to work with.

