

From the Chair

Iona McLaggan

Well I have been having a little delve into the extraordinary variety of clay processes and outcomes which are on offer at the International Ceramic Festival (ICF) this year. There is some seriously "out there" stuff going on. Check out the beautiful, delicate, sumptuous, organic forms created by Rebecca Hutchinson, so gorgeous and yet ephemeral.



You would think that one of the main tenets of ceramics is longevity. It is locked in, once fired the colours won't fade and given care, the material will not deteriorate. That is kind of the point..... And yet.. If you were not going to worry too much about how your piece was going to hold together in the firing. If you didn't have to bend your brain in knots figuring out how to join this material with that so that it lasts forever.... How free could you be? What might you conjure into being if function and longevity could be let go?

Consider also the punk raku of Jean-Francois Bourlard and Valerie Blaize. This is not potting for the faint hearted or the anally retentive, this is PUNK!! Seriously I urge you to look at their video clip on the ICF website. You sure wouldn't want to attempt this without your PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment)!

Of course there is beauty, harmony and meticulous attention to detail on offer too. For a taste of the other end of the spectrum, see the astonishing work of Ilona Romule. The sheer virtuosity harks back to previous eras of craftsmanship. The thought of wrapping my pretty little conservative head around both ends of this spectrum from painstaking, jaw dropping works in porcelain that may still be cherished in a thousand years to the equally sensuous looking ephemera of Rebecca Hutchinson is a really quite exciting prospect. When it comes to that punk raku business I am prepared for my jaw to be on the floor.

Maybe it is a sign of the environmentally fraught times in which we live but there does seem to be a strong thread of wood firing this year in the work of Phil Rogers, Nic Collins and Mathew Blakely and that includes, to my excitement, Liming Zhang's demonstration on how to build his mini wood fired kiln. What could be more perfect for the potter, inspired by all this delicious, earthy, exuberant work and keen to dip their toes but who doesn't have the access to the tons of wood and acres of drying sheds needed to fire a serious sized kiln.

Yep, I am ready to have my mind expanded.....

See you there.

Iona McLaggan