

Full Circle



First published in 2004 by Lungley and Howard Publishing
14 Tribune Drive
Houghton
Carlisle
CA3 0LE

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 0-9548310-0-4

Front cover
Ashley Howard, Stave, an arrangement of porcelain tea bowls.

Back cover
Martin Lungley, porcelain tea bowls

Photography by Stephen Brayne.

Typeface: Adobe Garamond
Designed by The Business and Marketing Office,
Cumbria Institute of the Arts.

Printed by Reeds Printers, Penrith, Cumbria, UK

An exhibition of thrown ceramics
by Ashley Howard and Martin Lungley

Essays by Alison Britton
& Emmanuel Cooper



Martin Lungley, celadon and copper glazed porcelain vases
tallest 40cm

In Parallel

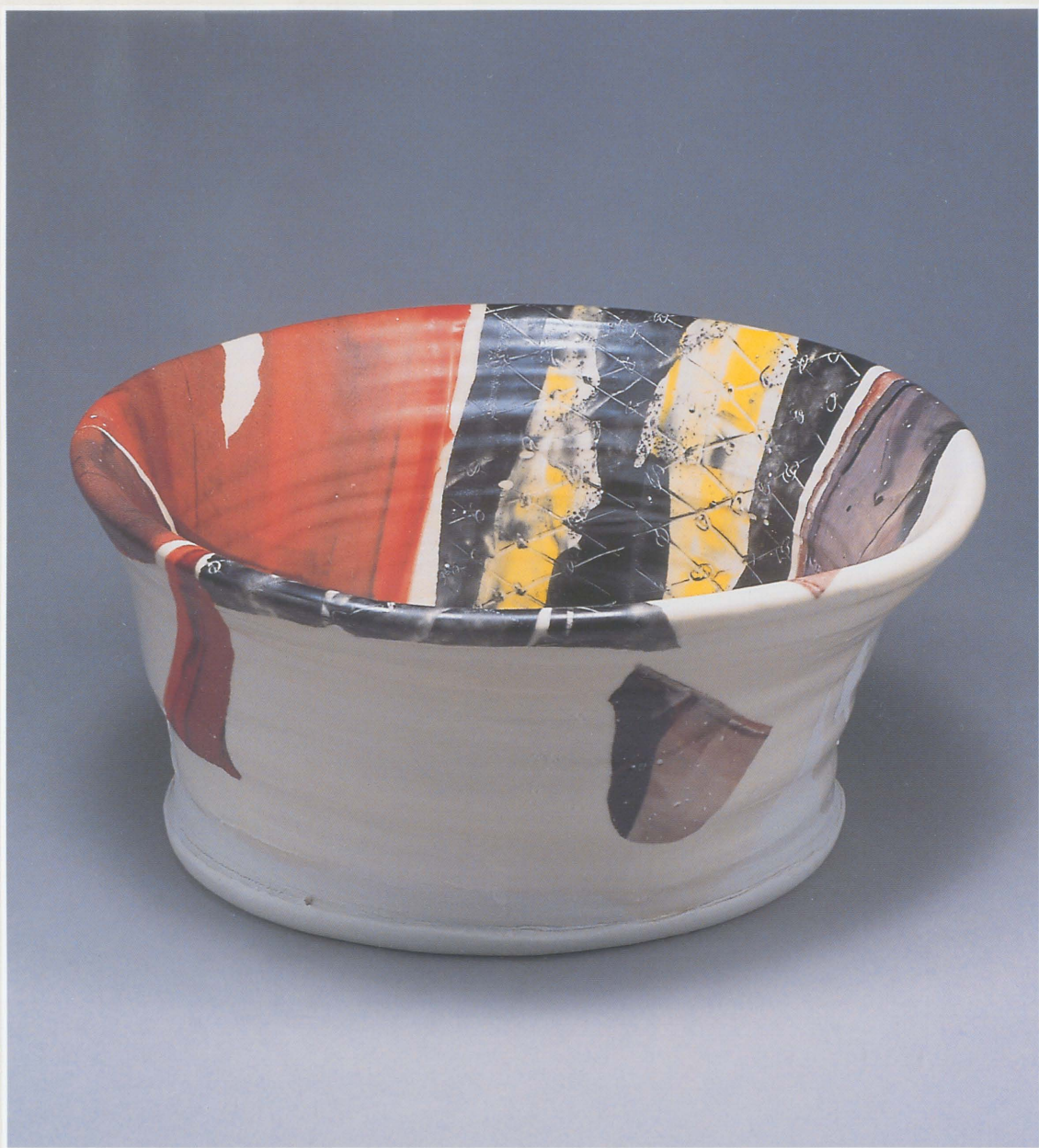
There is a pattern in the working lives of the two ceramists Ashley Howard and Martin Lungley that recalls one of the chief characteristics of Thomas Hardy's epic novels, which is the way the lives of the main characters interact. In an elegant narrative Hardy's heroes meet and part, crossing and uncrossing, responding to various forces and pressures, but always finding themselves pursuing their own ideas and intentions – lives in parallel. While Ashley Howard and Martin Lungley each produce highly distinctive work, in their training, education and approach to craft they have made similar journeys. Today, they live in opposite part of the country – Howard in leafy Kent, Lungley in hilly Cumbria – but both pursue related ideas in producing wheel thrown pots and share comparable views about the significance of function, whether conveyed in lively tableware or in more individual pieces, objects which would be at home in the wider domestic environment.

Both were born in Kent – Howard in Maidstone, Lungley in Dartford – and both were drawn to working in clay at an early age. In the 1980s they studied on the highly regarded Design/Ceramics course at Kent Institute of Art and Design, Rochester, following a programme loosely based on the Studio Pottery Course at Harrow, with a specific allegiance to a craft based approach. Under the watchful eye of course leader Peter Philips, students gained a sound and thorough understanding of the processes of making thrown and hand-built forms, many going on to establish international careers. At this point their paths diverged, Lungley to make garden pots, perfecting his throwing of large-scale terracotta objects, spending some ten years at various potteries eventually setting up the Hop

Farm Pottery. His book *Gardenware* (The Crowood Press, 1999) brought together a sound understanding of form with solid advice on making pots for the garden. By contrast, Howard established his own studio where he investigated, among other shapes, bowls and bottle forms covered with copper-rich slips, a surface that yielded soft blues, greens and purples. Later these were extended to matt, textured, cream-white glazes. He also combined his potting with teaching.

Feeling the need for a broader approach, in the mid 1990s Lungley entered the three year BA ceramics course at University of Wales, Cardiff, where he investigated a diverse range of techniques and processes, including salt glaze. He found the variety of the course inspirational and duly applied for, and was accepted, to study for an MA at the Royal College of Art. Howard, having worked alone or taught, first in a comprehensive, then at art schools, also began to feel the need to rethink his work, and in 2001 he embarked on the two year MA at the RCA, starting in the September after Lungley's graduation in July.

For both potters it was a fruitful two years, with the opportunity to look at new techniques and processes. For Lungley, this involved working on a large scale with stoneware and porcelain as well as evolving a variety of tea sets. From the RCA he moved to Cumbria and a two-year residency, which provided stability and a workshop, an ideal setting to hone his ideas and skills. Howard also moved from his familiar stoneware to porcelain, seeing the white, pristine surface as an ideal vehicle for enamel decoration, a technique he had not tried before. He also made a range of tableware. It was, for both potters, a fruitful period, for, while building



Ashley Howard, porcelain with enamel collage
60cm diameter by 35cm high

on earlier skills, they produced work that formed the basis of a new approach, involving new discoveries and ideas.

Central to each of their work is a commitment to wheel thrown forms, a particularly significant direction at a time when many ceramists are considering other techniques and processes. Tapping the potential of the wheel is a physically engaging as well as an aesthetic challenge, and both find it a highly creative process, making intelligent use of the freedom to pull up the clay, using the gently spiralling lines to suggest life and movement. Howard's flat-bottomed Fonts, with their gently tapering sides and thick, juicy rims are generous and full with an opulent air. His flat, cylindrical forms are more formal in feel, the shape contrasting well with the decorated surfaces, some of which are literally covered in transfers, overlapping and overlaid, to produce encrusted and colourful landscapes. This may also include references to aspects of ceramic history such as Wrotham ware, a slip-decorated range of terracotta pots made in Kent in the eighteenth century. The cross hatched slip patterning, which occurred on much of Wrotham ware, is abstracted by Howard to a series of incised marks in the enamel. After the excess and richness of the enamel the tall cups and chunky mugs – with foot rims that elevate the form – are reflective and quiet, despite the freedom of their making. Any distortion, such as the result of putting on the handle or adding the footring, is left, a celebration of the making process, adding a further dimension to these energetic forms.

The directness or looseness that Lungley explores in his porcelain includes a range of tall vases, the more cylindrical forms towering upwards, their vertical thrust highlighted by patterning such as finger gouging. Others, bowing outwards as if slightly inflated, reminiscent of the famous 1950s cigar shaped Skylon,

are decorated with incised or pressed lines that slightly distort the shape to create seductively sensual, pillow-like curves that invite the caress of the hand. Lungley's tea bowls are equally tactile, their soft, silky glazes flowing over the generously thrown forms. The pale blues and greens of the celadon glazes bring an ethereal quality to the forms, emphasising the intimacy of handling and using the bowls. By contrast the tea sets are more formal; coloured a pale creamy white, the porcelain is softened and muted allowing the crispness and delicacy of the shape to predominate. Like all skilled makers, Lungley is a meticulous craftsman, and the high degree of finish, the delicate rims and the neatly turned foot all make handling these pots a pleasure which is both practical and aesthetic.

The work by these two highly skilled and thoughtful potters beautifully complement each other, while sharing an analogous language, it uses grammar and syntax in its own individual way. Their pots remain in parallel, each following similar paths but with its own distinctive identity.

Emmanuel Cooper is a potter, writer and critic. He is editor of Ceramic Review, and visiting professor of ceramics and glass at the Royal College of Art. His biography of Bernard Leach was published by Yale University Press in 2003.



Ashley Howard, porcelain tea set with enamel collage



Martin Lungley, porcelain tea set with iron glaze

Fast and Loose: New Freedom with the Wheel

The 'stuff' of ceramics, its mass and mud, is tactile and compliant and has sustained a great range of creativity for most of time. There have always been all kinds of work in clay; though the studio pottery 'movement' in Britain evolving as a great modernist renewal in the mid 20th century, around Leach and Cardew, emphasised the wheel as the essential tool and focussed (ostensibly) on function – use and beauty in equal measure. In a purist mode, puritanical perhaps, they also specified which kinds of pot from the great universal history should be most esteemed. The looser sixties still loved the wheel and the handmade mug was a prop for an alternative lifestyle, communes and smallholdings. The period spawned in addition some hippy philosophy books about 'centering', but by the seventies when I was an MA student the prescriptiveness of Leach and co. had made throwing seem stale and difficult to make your own for a bolshy post-war bulge generation. A little more freedom was required. The Picasso exhibition shown in London in 1950 including ceramics had made a big impression.

An off-piste tendency, moves towards sculpture, had begun in the forties and fifties, in which artists had played around with clay and the pot form, and potters themselves had determinedly, often through hand-building rather than throwing, opened up the range of possibilities. The disruptive, 'awkward *and* beautiful' (in Angus Suttie's phrase) 'new ceramics' works of the seventies and eighties positively turned their backs on the wheel. In any creative discipline rules in the end are there to be torn up. But that flamboyant kind of ceramics never banished the tradition of wheel-thrown, subtly-glazed pottery.

By the late seventies a rural/urban division was apparent with many wheel -throwing potters working in the

country with barns, access to timber, space to build huge kilns, and fire volume production. The city potter probably worked in a communal workshop in a derelict warehouse, with electric kilns, making fewer one-off pieces. The approach to learning was also different – Leach and Cardew had thought that apprenticeship, 'the slower, radical, disciplined drill of the workshop' was definitely a better path for understanding the reality of the potter's life, and were very dismissive about what could be learned at art school.

Now, however, to learn about ceramics at art school is the normal route, and it is not easy to find a potter who is making in quantity and who will take on apprentices.

Reflecting on thirty years of pot making, and twenty years of teaching at the RCA which has included tutoring both the delightful participants in this exhibition, (though I have rarely thrown a pot myself since I was a student) I composed a list of career choices, questions a potter might ask him/herself on setting out:

To throw or not to throw

To make a one-off or to repeat

To make a pot or a sculpture

To glaze glossily for sensual reflections or to leave matt and emphasise the form

To have the same surface all over or to interrupt it

To put an image on the surface or to make a series of marks

In form or in surface, to be abstract or representational

To make work that is useable or just to be looked at (felt)

To make work that is 'about' something or to rely on the subliminal and hope something happens

To make work that sells easily or to have another job as well



Ashley Howard, stoneware with brush and collage enamel
40cm diameter by 30cm high



Martin Lungle, celadon glazed porcelain tea bowl
12cm diameter by 7.5cm high

To make works that are discrete, or installed
To occupy domestic space or institutional space.

Martin Lungley and Ashley Howard are in their potting prime. Both engaged with throwing as young HND students in the late eighties, and both have followed determined paths that combine chunks of producing and teaching and also coming back into education.

As mature students at the RCA, where Ashley succeeded Martin, they have risked the upheaval of many of their old certainties and have been part of a new mood re-energising ideas about the wheel. Their *new* careers have run for only a few years, and this is their first substantial exhibition. They have straightforward aims – they love throwing, are athletic and skilled and full of masculine energy.

The experiments that Martin undertook at the RCA were to do mainly with scale and texture. A series of very large wide-based bowls in porcelain or brick clay were loaded with slurry (very thick slip of the same body) during the making, which created beautiful rippled and crevassed exteriors, geological encrustations. With a sophisticated balance of control and leaving-be, the interior surfaces were clean and sharp. Ashley also concerned himself with great font-like bowls and his fresh impetus was into printed colour. Making many of his own enamels and taking the transfer into a more painterly 'abstract expressionist' field he was able to make a continuous gestural mark run over the lip of a bowl to be both inside and out, with surprising effect. Both Martin and Ashley have developed a way of being ebullient and modest with scale at the same time – each decided to work with tableware as another strand of their MA investigations, having never done so before. Both have succumbed to the porcelain preoccupation of recent years, where 'Limoges' says it all, but are inclined to glaze in delicate colours as well as white.

These two direct and fluent potters acknowledge Takeshi Yasuda as an inspiration. The existence of a new surge in the British throwing world is due I think to a great extent to his presence in this country for the last three decades. For Takeshi the sensuality of the table and food, the softness of his shapes using clay like butter, the formal composition of elements, his innovations with glaze, draw another more luscious kind of Asiatic thread from the histories of clay. Also in this wider picture of current work here on the wheel, the pots of Simon Carroll and the Nigerian-born Lawson Oyekan have further dissolved conventions of stiffness.

Martin and Ashley have the sort of passionate commitment of a protagonist or a proselytiser; both had articles published in *Ceramic Review* on leaving college. Martin wrote about relations between skill and art school curricula, and Ashley about throwing and altering – deforming the perfect circle while soft. Throwing and altering, obviously, expands the range of possible forms, loosens things up, and tells you something else about clay, tension, and the flexible sleeve that is a wet pot.

So what is there to love about throwing? Speed, fluency, the ultra-plasticity of clay in this slippery state, its response to human gesture. The pots in *Full Circle* express this sense of touch and explore the territory of containing forms with verve and grace.

If the wheel was a dead end to me in the seventies, my eyes now tell me that to feel free with this fabulously variable medium of clay is different today.

Alison Britton OBE is a potter who exhibits internationally and is represented by Barrett Marsden Gallery, London. She also writes, lectures and curates, and is a senior tutor at the Royal College of Art.



Ashley Howard, porcelain tea set

Curriculum Vitæ

Ashley Howard

EDUCATION

- 2003 MA Ceramics, Royal College of Art, Kensington, London
2001 Member of the HEA (Higher Education Academy)
2001 Member of the General Teaching Council for England
1992-93 Fully Qualified Teaching status
1983-87 HND Ceramics, Kent Institute of Art and Design,
Rochester, Kent

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 One Year On, Crafts Council at New Designers, Islington, London
2004 Brown, Bickers and Howard: The Tunnel Gallery, Tonbridge School,
Tonbridge, Kent
2003 Thomas Corman Arts: Cork Street, London
2003 Brown, Bickers and Howard: Urban Interiors, London
2003 Stoneware, Alpha House Gallery, Dorset
2002 Shortlist, Twyfords Bathtime project, RCA
Ceramic Contemporaries 4, UK touring exhibition
2000 NYAD2000, New York
2000 Loes and Reinier, Dventner, Netherlands
2000 One Two Five Gallery, Bath
Lynne Strover Gallery, Cambridge
Galerie van Meensel, Belgium
Nijmegen Museum, Netherlands
1997 Keramuse, Biltoven, Netherlands
1995 Bettles Gallery, Hampshire, with John Pollex
1994 CPA, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
New Designers, Islington, London

SELECTED WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

- 2001 Symposium in conjunction with Mo Jupp, Tel-Hai, Israel
Demonstrations including North Wales Potters and Barnet
Collection
Kiln workshop and tutorials, University of Westminster, Harrow
Seminar, Kent Potter's Association
Seminar, Midland Potters
Demonstration, Art in Clay, Hatfield
Visiting Lecturer, University of Westminster, Harrow

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- 2003-date Visiting Lecturer, BA Wood, Metal, Ceramics and Plastics,
Brighton University
2003-2004 Artist in Residence, Kent Institute of Art and Design, Rochester

- 2002-2003 Visiting Lecturer, Kent Institute of Art and Design, Rochester
2001-2003 MA student, Royal College of Art, London
2000-2001 Course coordinator/ Module Leader, BA Ceramics, University
of Westminster, Harrow
1989-2000 Head of Upper School Ceramics,
Herne Bay High School, Kent

PUBLICATIONS

- 2004 Altered States, Ceramic Review (205)
2003 Make Tracks to..., Daily Telegraph Magazine May 31
2003 Homes and Property, London Evening Standard, May 28
2003 Work featured in The Glaze Book by Stephen Murfitt,
Thames and Hudson
2003 Work featured in Ceramic Decoration by Jo Connell
2003 Work featured in Stoneware by Richard Dewar
Kyra Cane: Ceramic Review (187)
2000 Exhibition featured in Venue magazine, Bath and Avon
2000 Work reviewed by Peter Hayes: Studiopottery website
2000 Matt Glazes: Ceramic Review (186)
2000 Work featured in The Complete Practical Potter by Josie Warshaw
1997 Strong Form, Vibrant Colour – article by David Whiting:
Ceramic Review (166)

AWARDS

- Peers Award: Art in Clay, Hatfield House.
1995 First Prize, International Potters' Festival, Milsbeek, Netherlands.

ASSOCIATIONS/SOCIETIES

- Elected to Council of the CPA (Craft Potters Association)
Elected Fellow of the CPA

OTHER

- 2003 Invited judge, London Potters Annual Exhibition
2001 Invited Judge and Lecturer, Alix de Rothschild 2001 Exhibition,
Tel Hai, Israel
2000 Member of selection panel, Alix de Rothschild Ceramics Award 2000
1997-2000 Coordinator, Setting Out
(CPA annual exhibition for graduates)
1997 Work admitted to Stoke on Trent Museum collection
1996 Work admitted to Enger private collection, Germany
1996 Work admitted to Nijmegen Museum collection, Netherlands

Curriculum Vitæ

Martin Lungley

EDUCATION

MA Ceramics, Royal College of Art, June 2001
BA (Hons) Ceramics, First class, U.W.I.C (Cardiff), July 1999
HND Design Crafts/Ceramics K.I.A.D (Rochester), July 1989
NDD Design Crafts/Ceramics K.I.A.D (Rochester), July 1987

EXHIBITIONS

ten@20, Outfitterers Gallery, Oct 2003–Nov 2003
House URBIS, Manchester, Nov 2002–Jan 2003
Contemporary Ceramics Showcase, London, Oct 2002
Handle with Care, Bluecoat Display Center, Liverpool, Oct 2002
One Year On, The Design Centre, Islington, London, July 2002
Ceramic Contemporaries 4, Touring exhibition, starts Royal College of Art, London April 2002–July 2003
Mobilityshow Centrum, Goerd Werk, Belgium, Nov 2001
Setting Out, Contemporary Ceramics, London, Jan 1999
Hampton Court Flower Show, Hampton Court Palace, London, July 1996
Daily Telegraph House & Garden Spring Fair, Olympia, London, 1997
Hampton Court Flower Show, Hampton Court Palace, London, July 1995

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Scottish Potters Ceramics Festival, guest demonstrator, April 2004
Fire over the North, invited artist, Upfront Gallery, Cumbria, Aug 2003
Aberystwyth International Ceramics Festival, guest demonstrator, July 2003
Ceramic Contemporaries 4, Seminar, guest speaker, Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, April 2003

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Next Move Artist in Residence (Ceramics), Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Aug 2001–Aug 2003
Designer for Spring Pottery, Spring Bay, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, W.I., Dec 2000–Jan 2001
Designer for Kempton Terracotta, Arundel Rd, Brighton, June 1999–Oct 1999
Proprietor of the Hop Farm Pottery (studio pottery making Gardenware), 1994–1997
Repetition Thrower for the following potteries, 1990–1994
S&B Evans & Sons, 7a Ezra Street, London E2 7RH
Kempton Terracotta, Arundel Rd, Brighton, East Sussex
Robus Ceramics, Evington Park, Ashford, Kent
Manningtree Pottery, High Street, Manningtree, Essex

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Visiting Lecturer, Camberwell College of Art, London, Feb 2004
Part-time Lecturer, Ceramics, Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Oct 2001–ongoing
Visiting Lecturer, Foundation Studies, Cumbria Institute of the Arts, February 2002
Visiting Lecturer, BA Ceramics, Christchurch College Canterbury, January 2002
Visiting Lecturer, BA Ceramic C.C.A.D (Carlisle), May 2001
Ceramics Teacher, Stanley Park High School Surrey, 1990–1991

PUBLICATIONS

The Future of Skill, Ceramic Review, Issue 191 Sept/Oct 2001
Gardenware, published by Crowood Press 1999 ISBN 1-86-126-226-4

AWARDS

Mick Casson Thrown Domestic Ceramics Award, Ceramic Contemporaries 4 April 2002
Contemporary Ceramics Showcase Award, Ceramic Contemporaries 4 April 2002
Next Move Residency at C.C.A.D. (Carlisle) funded by The Crafts Council and North West Arts 2001
Recognition for achievements in ceramics, Highgrove House Luncheon 1999

ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES

Professional member of The Craft Potters Association
Member of Northern Potters Association

OTHER

Joint co-ordinator of a 19-day project to set up a pottery workshop in Rubik, Albania.
Dec 98–Jan 99 and June 2002
Work represented in The Ceramics Collection, University of Wales Aberystwyth and the Museum of British Crafts, Dorchester



Martin Lungley, celadon glazed porcelain bowl
28cm diameter by 12cm high

Acknowledgements

There are so many people without whose help and support full circle would not have been possible we would like to thank all involved and extend special thanks to the following.

Our wives and partners Alison and Louise respectively, the Kent Institute of Art and Design, in particular Daniel Nash BA and Mike Head. The University of Brighton, especially Alma Boyes and Steven Beesley MA(RCA), Cumbria Institute of the Arts with special thanks to the ceramics department, Ian Farren and Malcolm Farrar. We would also like to thank Stephen Brayne, Alison Britton and Emmanuel Cooper for their contribution to this catalogue. Lastly we would like to give special thanks to Ray Pearson, Gill Brown, Briggitt and Michael Head to whom we feel our debt of gratitude is too big to pay.

The Orangery Gallery, Holland Park, London 7–15 August 2004

Zandra Rhodes Gallery, Kent Institute of Art and Design, Rochester, Spring 2005

Handverk Og Hönnun, Adalstræti 12, Reykjavík, Summer 2005

Platform Gallery, Station Road, Clitheroe, 24 September–29 October 2005

