

HALES GALLERY

Richard Slee *Fit for Purpose*

Private View: Thursday 28 February, 6-8:30pm
1 March – 6 April 2013



Candlesticks, 2012, glazed ceramic, 37 x 20 x 16 cm (each)

Hales Gallery is pleased to present its second solo exhibition of new works by Richard Slee, one of Britain's most important ceramic artists.

Slee rarely approaches an exhibition with a focused idea or agenda. Instead, he prefers to intuitively select objects and forms to act as starting points for his vast array of sculptures. The works come together to form instinctively produced installations and are adapted to suit the space in which they are to be shown. In preparation for his show at Hales Gallery, Slee has assembled in his Kiln room a ludicrously sporadic selection of objects including snakes, brightly coloured tin cans, functionless old fashioned telephones, walking-sticks and umbrellas (one in the guise of a giant carrot) and a giant nose, made in the form of a hammer. At first glance, there is little that draws these spurious objects together; however on closer examination it quickly becomes clear that dysfunction and futility form a common thread.

Fit for Purpose sees Slee create his very own psychologically broken down environment where nothing operates as it should. Everything looks cheerful, with brightly glazed surfaces, but the works are, at heart, melancholic in nature. In this environment, the world flies in the face of the modernist design tenet of 'form follows function': there are dumb candle stick telephones that have no speaking or listening pieces and are plainly not communicating with each other; there is also a ridiculous five piece earthenware coconut shy with pearly glazed ceramic balls. It's beautiful, but, as the title of the show describes, not fit for purpose. Slee's preferred method of display avoids the typical art gallery plinth in favour of the manufactured furniture present in the mass market. Often the objects sit casually, and at other times they may take on the mantle of a historic decorative trope such as the pairing of identical pieces suggesting a more formal age. It is difficult to ignore a certain British humour in the way Slee's cheeky stand acts as metaphors which reflect back at us. Slee takes a kind of perverse pleasure in making jovial objects whilst simultaneously pointing at the hapless, if not completely hopeless.

Richard Slee (b. 1946, Cumbria, UK) has an extensive exhibition history both in the UK and abroad. Selected exhibitions include *Richard Slee: From Utility to Futility*, Victoria and Albert Museum (UK); *Postmodernism*, Victoria and Albert Museum (UK); *Camp Futility*, Studio Voltaire (UK); *Cult Fiction*, Hayward Gallery (UK), travelled to The New Art Gallery Walsall, Castle Museum and Art Gallery (Nottingham), City Art Gallery (Leeds), Arts Centre Aberystwyth (Wales) and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery (Carlisle); *Panorama*, Tate St. Ives (UK); *Secret History of Clay*, Tate Liverpool (UK); *Masterpieces in Ceramics from the V&A*, The Korea Foundation Cultural Centre, Seoul (Korea); *Richard Slee*, National Museum, Stockholm (Sweden). He is the winner of 2001 Jerwood Applied Arts Prize in Ceramics.

Slee's work is represented in a number of important international collections including the British Council (UK), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (USA), Museum of Arts and Design, New York (USA), Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (Japan), National Museum, Stockholm (Sweden), Corcoran Museum of Art (USA), Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park (Japan), Stedelijk Museum (The Netherlands) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (London). Slee lives and works in London.