

Creativity in ceramics pays off

Olga Fitzpatrick

Company:
Olga Fitzpatrick Ceramics

Position: founder

Location:
The Cow House,
Blackberry Lane,
Dublin 6

By Carol Hayes

Olga Fitzpatrick has been working in ceramics for a number of years. Her most recognisable work to date has been her "Fat Ladies" nude workings in clay.

Fitzpatrick's first foray into art was when she was still at school; she began making her own jewellery and travelled around Ireland selling it at festivals. She got such a kick from the fact people wanted to buy something she had made, that she continued to do this throughout her time in art college.

"I love the whole creative process, simply getting a piece of clay and moulding it into a piece of art – the possibilities are endless.

Creating something from scratch, nurturing it, developing it and then selling it gives me a great sense of satisfac-



Olga Fitzpatrick: 'I love the whole creative process, simply getting a piece of clay and moulding it into a piece of art – the possibilities are endless'

TONY O'SHEA

tion," said Fitzpatrick.

Fitzpatrick's work has since developed from her nude figures to the concept she is currently working on: framed ceramic wall pieces.

These focus on explosions of colour which she hopes will evoke certain feelings and memories in the viewer.

Fitzpatrick studied cera-

mics at Limerick School of Art and Design from 1991 to 1994. She is now teaching part-time in Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Dublin as well as working from her studio in Rathmines.

Even though Fitzpatrick has worked with ceramics for eight years her new pieces focus on combining ceramics

with glass and are more abstract in its depiction. "In my new work I am trying to reveal part of a secret to challenge the viewer to what they see in the work," said Fitzpatrick.

"The pieces that I am creating at the moment are quite striking, even though the process of making involves them being fired to red hot tempera-

tures, the results are incredibly meditative. "Because of the nature of glass each piece is absolutely unique," said Fitzpatrick.

Having recently had a successful sell-out exhibition at the Davis Gallery in Dublin, the future looks bright for Fitzpatrick. "Well it's always very exciting when exhibiting but I

also really enjoy commissioned work. Getting feedback from people is extremely important.

"I'm often amazed how people read into various works and get a great kick out of it. I'm now working on preparing for my next exhibition and any pieces I am commissioned to do," she said.

Ceramic artist turns to the art of abstract



INTERIORS

Alexander Fitzgerald

Anyone labouring under the illusion that ceramicware is fussy rather than fashionable would do well to look at the work of Olga Fitzpatrick. The Dublin-born artist, who studied ceramics at the Limerick College of Art and Design, has been firing on all cylinders since setting up her studio in 1997 and has amassed a legion of fans who can't help but fall for her eye-catching creations.

Eschewing big, brash graphics or over-designed shapes in favour of simple yet sleek pieces, Fitzpatrick's creations provide a crossover between functional craft and fine art, and have a distinctive abstract aesthetic that works well within traditional and contemporary settings alike. "My own personal style is quite minimalist – I use porcelain which is a very pure white clay and I incorporate glass in strong colours," she says. "It's an unusual combination but it's one that lends itself to many different types of décor."

Fans of the ceramic artist would certainly seem to agree: many of her porcelain pieces have been acquired for private collections throughout Ire-



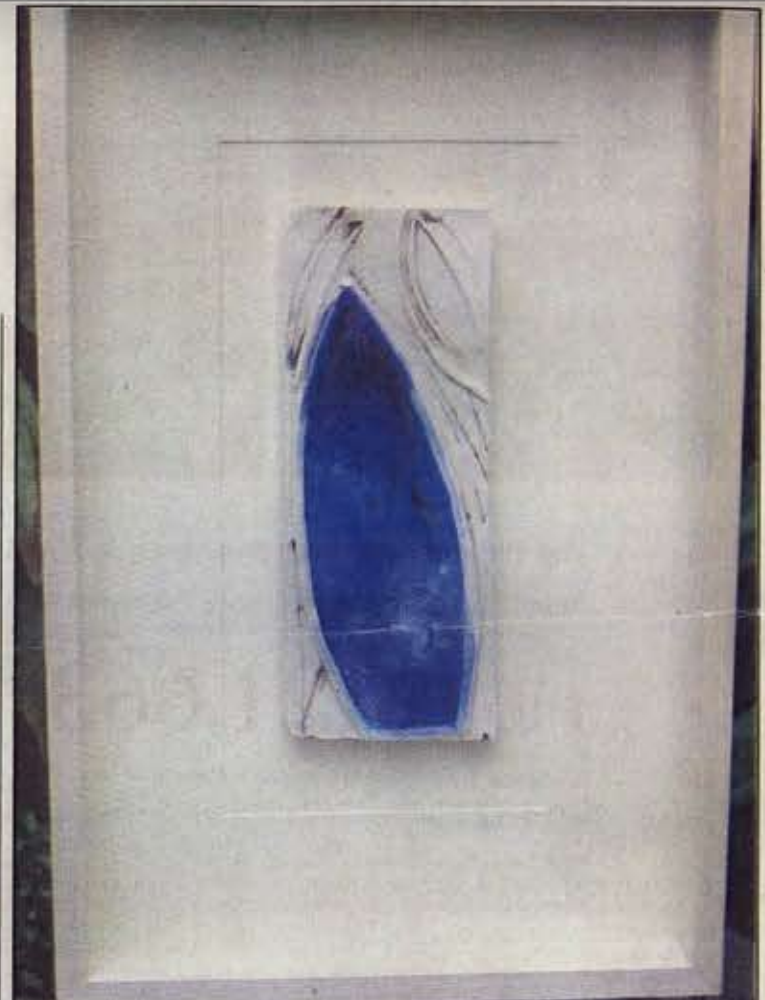
Olga Fitzpatrick's ceramic creations provide a crossover between functional craft and fine art

land and the USA, while a number of designs have been purchased by government bodies including the Office of Public Works. A self-professed perfectionist who bridges sculpture and painting, Fitzpatrick produces pieces which bear little resemblance to the usual craft shop fare, and her work is further differentiated by her innovative use of different materials.

"My work fuses ceramics with glass and the resulting pieces are completely unique," she said. "The glass fuses at a certain temperature and then slowly cools leaving that moment captured forever. Each piece can take up to three weeks to complete and, given the complex creative process involved and the kiln firing, only

a limited number are produced." Equipped with an eye that can find constant stimuli in the everyday environment, she often looks to nature when conceiving ideas for her designs. "Many of the blues I use have been inspired by evening and changes of colour in the sky at dusk, while several of my pieces use natural objects such as leaves to reflect their inspiration in nature," she said.

Travel, too, has proved a fertile source of inspiration over the years while, in more recent times, literature, in particular the poem *Advent* by Patrick Kavanagh has come to exert a significant influence on her work. The poet's observation that "through a glimpse too wide there comes in no



wonder" has significant resonance for Fitzpatrick, who likes to create pieces that challenge the viewer.

"As Kavanagh points out in the poem, when you see too much of something then it often loses its wonder or, worse still, it kills it," Fitzpatrick said. "I've incorporated window-like features and what I describe as 'keyholes' into my designs, where masses of melted glass-infused glass contrast against the gentle lustre of the porcelain. This way, the viewer can only see a particular section and not everything is revealed all at once."

While the majority of Fitzpatrick's designs to date have been concerned with the female form in a representational style, her latest body of work

(from €850) sees her moving towards a style that is more abstract. "I was making the figures for a while and still enjoy making them but I just believe in moving on as an artist. I don't know where these [abstract] pieces came from – it certainly wasn't a conscious shift in my style but rather a natural progression," she said.

Whether Fitzpatrick's followers will appreciate her new direction remains to be seen. In the meantime, however, an exhibition of her designs, which runs until November 13 at the Blue Leaf Gallery in Fairview, Dublin 3, should secure a new fan base.

The Blue Leaf Gallery, 10 Marino Mart, Fairview, Dublin 3, 01-8333456, www.blueleafgallery.com