



C E R A M I C  
S E R I E S ●

martin hearne



A B E R Y S T W Y T H A R T S C E N T R E

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There has been a tremendous change in the ceramics of Martin Hearne. Ever since he started working with clay at evening classes, Hearne has been associated with items such as plates and vases which have been decorated with outlined and painted representations of the human figure. Technically and artistically accomplished, the colourful, exuberant designs and well-made forms found a ready market. Now these have been abandoned in favour of free standing figure sculptures, which though recognisable as distant cousins of those figurative designs which appeared on the pots, have a physical and emotional independence.

In many ways the figures bring Hearne's interest in three dimensional form and painting together. His background is that of an artist who set out to study sculpture, becoming a student at St. Martins School of Art in London in the 1960's. This was a period when the fashion was for abstract metal sculptures made under the guiding hand of Anthony Caro, a genre with which Hearne discovered he had little sympathy. A transfer to painting and print-making offered some escape. As an artist concerned with the human form, it was not surprising that the art school experience was one that meant little to him. 'I was', he says, 'a different person then'.

A series of odd jobs followed before he was attracted to pottery evening classes in North London which had the added bonus of creche facilities for his child. They proved a great

success and set him on his career as a potter. In 1989 Hearne and his partner left London and moved to Bradford. With a Crafts Council grant he set up his studio where he made his range of pots, vases and bowls in earthenware. Exhibitions and regular orders consolidated his career. Orders were firm but Hearne began to feel constrained by the need to produce vessels, thinking that there was a conflict between the desire to decorate and the restriction of the shapes he was making.

As Hearne observes 'The decoration has always been the inspiration for the pot'.

The opportunity to reconsider his ceramics came two years ago when Hearne was offered a secure job teaching BA students two days a week at Bradford and Ilkley Community College. It was a timely opportunity.

Free from the need to produce pots to order, and from having to repeat regular shapes and designs, he had time to explore other ways of representing the figure. At college he had access to printing and etching presses which opened up the possibility of producing two dimensional work. The luxury of being able to experiment with clay resulted in the 'great leap forward'; vessel forms were gradually abandoned in the favour of free standing figures which evolved over a period of time. There is a sense of abandon and excitement in these figures which, whether clothed or naked, male or female, explore the inner world of the emotions and senses. In this respect, it is interesting to hear Hearne say 'In many ways they are all about aspects of me.'

With the huge Picasso exhibition now open in London it is timely to see an artist looking creatively at the way the stylistic conventions of Tribal art and the theories of Cubism can provide an alternative way of representing three dimensional form. The influence of such work clearly informs Hearne's figures but not slavishly so. It is not surprising that Hearne has just finished reading the impressive biography of Picasso by John Richardson. Picasso was, says Hearne, an artist who knew about 'the pleasure principle', about how to enjoy himself - a feeling often evident in Hearne's figurative art. For Hearne, the desire to create is part of a concern with the human condition, whether explored in fine etchings or modelled in clay.

The figure pieces evolved slowly. First there were two dimensional forms with a front and a back very much in the



tradition of Staffordshire chimney ornaments. 'One solution was to 'attenuate' the vessel, to create two fronts as a front and a back. This made two flat surfaces on which the design could be controlled and kept faithful to its two-dimensional inspiration.' Early figures were made from two slabs of clay moulded and joined at the edges, and were still closely connected to the idea of the figure as vessel, as container. Using a minimal range of colours, Hearne painted each side differently - aspects of the same figure perhaps which have an independent existence as they could never be seen at the same time. As the pieces appeared to work and open up the sort of possibilities Hearne found relevant, so he started to build more three-dimensional forms using carefully shaped pieces of slabbed clay. The new forms, unlike his trailed and painted decorations which concentrated on line, were about exploring volume and mass. Colour was left in favour of a more austere monochrome, giving the pieces a bone-like appearance which again heightened the importance of form.

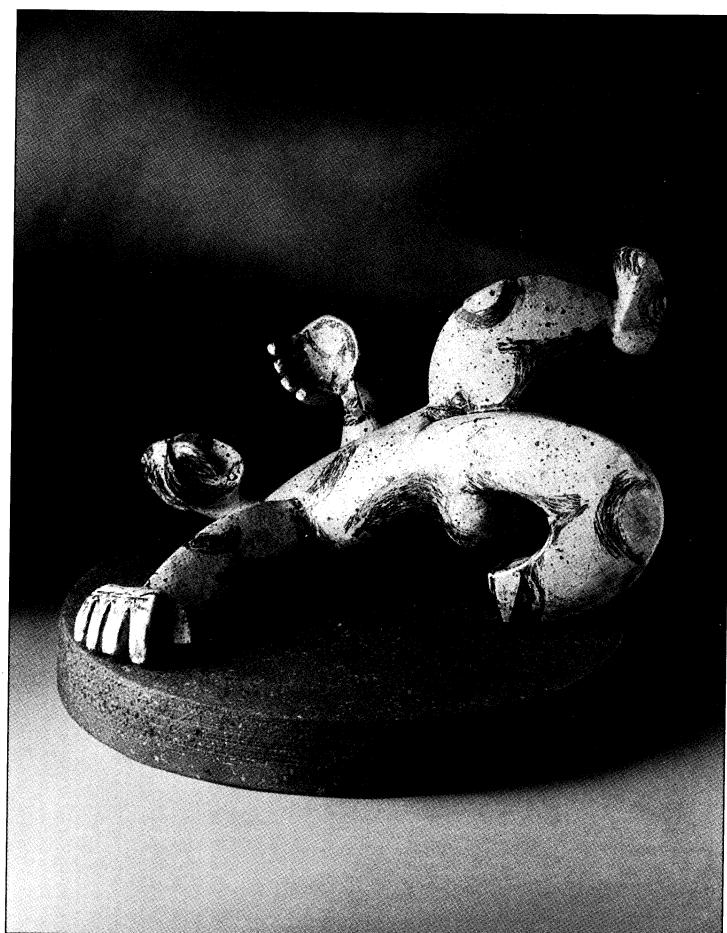
Speed is not a crucial part of the building process. The figures are slow to construct as each component has to stiffen before others are added, allowing ample time to think and let the idea develop. Experiments with delicate splashed dots on some of the figures gives the surface an attractive speckled appearance. On some figures areas of pale browny biscuit colour with scratched lines reminiscent of etching, suggest shadow and volume. A thin layer of a semi-matt glaze completes the process. Keen to incorporate the qualities of clay into the forms themselves rather than cover it with surface decoration, Hearne is planning to add coloured grog to the basic clay body.

Like many artists concerned with the figure, Hearne regularly practises life-drawing, though it is often people casually observed which serve as starting points. To ensure the correct anatomical positions, he often uses his own body as a model for his work. 'I use it to achieve a balance between the sculptural form and anatomical correctness. Proportion and anatomy can be distorted to make the figure more expressive, convey more feeling and emotion.' Only a quick sketch is carried out before starting, so that the figure can grow and develop organically and change as it does so. The absence of any attempt at naturalism leaves the figure free to suggest aspects of inner emotions as well as outward expression. Some figures seem to be in motion, running or jumping with pleasure. Others lie on the ground, performing some sort of acrobatic feat. One figure 'Fallen Man' (attached to a round base), gives the impression of the tension and definition of a Bacon painting without any of the gloom and depression associated with the work of that artist. Scale, always a determining factor in the art-craft debate, is one with which Hearne is concerned. Most of his figures stand some 15"- 20" tall, an object size many can accommodate in their home, and definitely table-based. Hearne has also experimented with much larger pieces, and is still exploring this area. But there is a welcome intimacy both in the scale and quality of Hearne's work which makes the figures accessible and ownable. Hearne's figure sculptures are about life itself, about the twists and turns, but above all about the sheer pleasure of being alive. They express a welcome optimism which is definitely life-enhancing.

#### **Emmanuel Cooper**

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Cafwyd newid sylweddol yng ngherameg Martin Hearne. Er pan ddechreuodd weithio gyda chlai mewn dosbarthiadau nos y mae Hearne wedi'i gysylltu ag citemau megis platiâu a ffiolau sydd wedi'u haddurno gyda chynrychioliadau amlinellol wedi'u peintio o ffigurau dynol. Yn gaboledig o ran techneg a chelfyddyd, cafwyd marchnad barod i'r ffurfiau a dyluniwaith lliwgar a chymen yma.

Bellach, mae Hearne wedi troi cefn ar y rhain ac yn eu lle ceir cerfluniau rhyddsafol o ffigurau, ac er y gellir eu nabod fel cefndryd pell i'r dyluniadau ffigurol a ymddangosodd ar y llestri, mae iddynt annibyniaeth ffisegol ac emosiynol.

Mewn sawl ffordd y mac'r ffigurau hyn yn dod â diddordeb Hearne mewn ffurf a phinctio ynghyd. Arlunydd oedd Hearne a aeth ati i astudio cerfluniaeth, gan fynychu Ysgol Gelf Sant Martin yn Llundain yn y 1960au. Dyma gyfnod pryd mai cerfluniaeth fetel, haniaethol, a wnaeth pwyd o dan arweiniad Anthony Caro, oedd y ffasiwn. Gwelodd Hearne nad oedd ganddo fawr o gydymdeimlad â'r genre yma. Cafodd rywfath o ddihangfa drwy droi at beintio a gwneud printiau. Fel arlunydd a oedd yn ymddiddori yn y ffurf ddynol, does fawr o syndod na fu profiad yr ysgol gelf yn golygu rhyw lawer iddo. "Yr adeg honno," meddai, "roeddwn i'n berson gwahanol."

Cafodd gyfnod o wneud hyn a llall am ychydig cyn iddo gael ei ddenu at ddosbarthiadau nos yng ngogledd Llundain. Un fantais yn y cyswllt yma oedd cyfleusteriau'r feithrinfa i'w blentyn. Bu'r dosbarthiadau'n llwyddiant mawr iddo gan ei roi ar ben ffordd fel crochenydd. Ym 1989, gadawodd Hearne a'i bartner Lundain gan symud i Bradford. Gyda grant gan y Cyngor Crefft, sefydlodd stiwdio lle y bu wrthi'n llunio'i gyfres o lestri, ffiolau a phowlenni o bridd. Drwy arddangosfeydd ac archebion cyson dechreuodd ei yfya ymsefydlogi. Roedd yr archebion yn rheolaidd, ond dechreuodd Hearne deimlo'n rhwystredig oherwydd yr angen i gynhyrchu llestri o hyn, gan synhwyro gwrthdarо rhwng yr awydd i addurno a chyfngiadau y siapiau yr oedd yn eu gwneud. Fel y nodi Hearne ei hun: "Yr addurn yw i ysbyrdolaeth am y llestri bob amser."

Ddw y flynedd yn ôl cafodd gyfle i ailystyried ei gerameg, pan gynigiwyd iddo swydd barhaol yn dysgu myfyrrwr BA am ddau ddiwrnod yn yr wythnos yng Ngholeg Cymunedol Bradford ac Ilkley.

Cyfle amserol iawn oedd hwn. Yn rhydd o'r anghenraíd i gynhyrchu llestri ar gyfer archebion, ac o'r orfodaeth i ailadrodd siapiau a dyluniadau rheolaidd, roedd ganddo amser i anturio gyda ffyrdd craill i gynrychiolf'r ffigur. Yn y coleg, roedd yn cael defnyddio gweisg printio ac ysgythru a oedd yn agor posibiliadau ar gyfer cynhyrchu gwaith dau-ddimensiwn. Canlyniad y cyfle braff yma i arbrofi gyda chlai oedd "y llam mawr ymlaen"; yn raddol, cefnodd ar ffurfiau llestri ac yn eu lle cafwyd ffigurau rhyddsafol a ddatblygodd dros gyfnod o amser. Ceir teimlad o benryddid a chyffro yn y ffigurau hyn sydd, p'un ari a ydynt wedi'u gwisgo neu'n noeth, yn wriw neu'n fanw, yn anturio i fy mewnol yr emosiynau a'r synhwyrau. Yn y cyswllt yma, dioddorol yw geiriau Hearne: "Mewn llawer iawn o ffyrdd, maen nhw i gyd yn ymwneud ag ageddau arna i.

"Gydag arddangosfa anferthol Picasso yn Llundain ar hyn o bryd, digon amserol yw gweld arlunydd yn edrych yn greadigol ar y ffurd y mae confensiynau arddulliadol o Gelf Iwythol a'r damcaniaethau ynglyn â chiwbiaeth yn cynnig fford amgen i gynrychioli'r ffurf tri dimensiwn. Yn amlwg, gwellir dylanwad gwaith o'r fath ar ffigurau Hearne ond heb eu hefelychu'n slafaidd. Does ryfedd fod Hearne newydd orffen darllen cofiant Picasso gan John Richardson. Yn ôl Hearne, roedd Picasso'n arlunydd a wyddai am "Yr Egwyddor o Bleser", am sut i gael hwyl - teimlad sydd yn aml i'w weld yng nghelf ffigurol Hearne. I Hearne, mac'r arwydd i greu'n rhan o'i gonsyrn â'r cyflwr dynol, p'un ari yr eir ati i'w archwilio drwy ysgythriadau cain neu i'w fodelu mewn clai.



Esblygodd y darnau ffigurol yn araf. Ar y dechrau, roedd ynt yn ffurfiaw dau- ddimensiwn gyda thu blaen a thu cefn yn onol â thraddodiad addunriadau simdde Swydd Stafford. "Un ateb oedd drwy "sgwaru" y llestr, i greu dau ben blaen fel pen blaen a chefn. Golygal hyn fod yna ddu arwyneb gwastad a gellid rheoli'r dylunwaith arnynt gan llyn'u ffyddlon wrth yr ysbyrydoliaeth ddu ddimensiwn" Roedd y ffigurau cynnar yn cael eu gwneud o ddwy grawen o glai wedi'u mowldio a'u hasio ar hyd yr ymylon, ac roedd ganddynt gysylltiad agos o hyd â'r syniad o'r ffigur fel llestr, fel cynhwysydd. Gan ddefnyddio amrediad mor gyfngi o liwiau ag oedd yn bosibl, byddai Hearne'n peintio'r ddwy ochr yn wahanol - gan gyfleo agweddu ar yr un ffigur a chanddynt, hwyrach, fodolaeth annibynnol gan na ellid byth eu gweld ar yr un pryd.

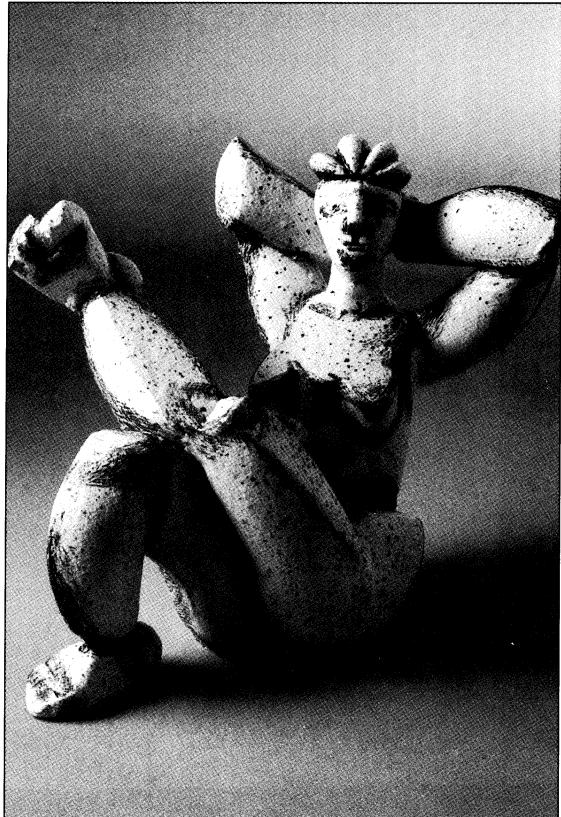
Wrth i'r darnau ymddangos fel pe baent yn agor y math o posibiliadau yr oedd Hearne'n eu cael yn berthnasol, aeth ati i wneud rhagor o ffurfiau tri dimensiwn gan ddefnyddio darnau o glai slabiedig wedi'u siapio'n ofalus. Roedd y ffurfiau newydd, yn wahanol i dresi'i addurniadau peintiedig a fu'n canolbwytio ar linellau, yn ymwneud â foliwn a mas. Yn lle amrywiaeth o liwiau cafwyd dull unlliw llymach, gan roi golwg esgyrnog i'r darnau sydd eto'n hybu pwysigrwydd y ffurfi.

Nid cyflymdra biau hi yn y broses o lunio'r ffigurau hyn. Gwaith ara deg yw hwn, gyda phob cydran yn gorfol caledu cyn i'r lleill gael eu hychwanegu, sy'n rhoi digon o gyfle i hel meddyliau a gadael i'r syniad ddatblygu. Mae arbrofi gyda dotio delicet wedi'u sblastio ar rai o'r ffigurau yn rhoi i'r arwyneb olwg frith ddeniadol. Ar rai o'r ffigurau, bydd darnau lliw bisgeden golau wedi'u crafu gyda llinellau tenau sy'n atgoffa rhywun o ysgythrui, yn awgrymu cysgod a foliwm. Bydd gwydro tenau lled-fat yn cyfannu'r broses. Yn awyddus i ymgorffori priodweddau'r clai yn y ffurfi eu hunain yn hytrach na'i orchuddio ag addurniadau, bwriad Hearne yw ychwanegu grog lliw i'r corff clai sylfaenol.

Yn yr un modd â llawer iawn o arlunwyr sy'n ymddiddori mewn ffigurau, bydd Hearne'n tynnu bywluniadau, er yn aml, pobl y hapsylwir arnynt yw'r man cychwyn. Er mwyn sicrhau'r safle anatomegol cywir, bydd Hearne yn aml yn defnyddio'i gorff ei hun fel model ar gyfer y gwaith yma. "Mi fydda i'n ei ddefnyddio i gael cydwysedd rhwng y ffur cerfluniol a chywirdeb anatomegol. Gall cyfrannedd ac anatomeg gael eu stumio i gael y ffigur i gyfleo mwy, i fynegi rhagor o deimlad ac emosiwn."

Braslun sydyn yn unig a wneir cyn dechrau, fel y gall y ffigur dyfu a datblygu'n organig gan newid wrth wneud. Mae absenoldeb unrhyw ymgais at naturiolaeth yn gadael y ffigurau'n rhydd i awgrymu agweddu ar emosiynau mewnol yn ogystal â mynegiant allanol. Ymddengys rhai ffigurau fel pe baent ar symud, yn rhedeg neu'n neiddio newn llawenydd. Ceir eraill sydd ar orwedd, yn gwneud rhywfath o gampau acrobatic. Mae un o'r ffigurau "Dyn Syrthiedig", sy'n soudwr wrth waelod crwn, yn rhoi'r argraff o densiwn a diffiniad a geir mewn peintiaid gan Bacon heb y felan a'r prudd-der a gysylltir â gwaith yr arlunydd hwnnw.

Mae graddfa bob amser yn ffactor o bwys yn y drafodaeth celfcrefft, ac, yn sicr, mae Hearne yn ymboeni yn ei chylch. Saif y rhan fwyaf o'r ffigurau tua 15" - 20" o uchder. Dyma maint y gellir y rhan fwyaf ddygymod ag ef ar fwredd yn eu cartrefi. Mae Hearne hefyd wedi arbrofi gyda darnau llawer iawn yn fwy, ac mae'n dal i anturio i'r cyfeiriad yma. Ond ceir agosatrwydd braf yng ngraddfa ac ansawdd gwaith Hearne sy'n golygu bod y ffigurau o fewn cyrraedd, yn wrthrychau y gellir bod yn berchen arnynt. Sôn am fywyd ei hun y mae cerfluniau Hearne, am hynt a helynt bywyd, ond, yn anad dim, byddant yn sôn am y pleser pur o fod yn fwy. Ceir ynddynt optimistaeth braf sy'n rhoi hwb sylweddol i fywyd.



### **Emanuel Cooper**

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