

## COLLECT 2011

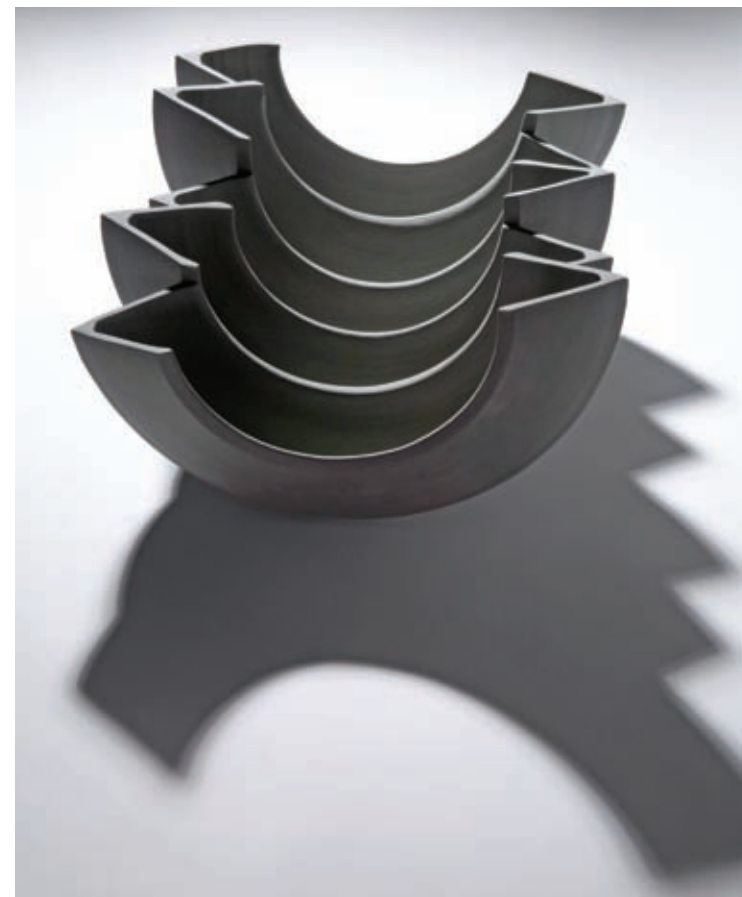


Above / Collect 2011 at Saatchi Gallery, London

If craft can be said to have pinnacles, Collect – the international applied arts fair held annual at the Saatchi Gallery in London – must be one of them. Showing the work of the top makers, represented by the top galleries, and selling at prices more often expressed in thousands rather than hundreds of pounds, Collect is an unashamedly elitist event. It caters for a demanding clientele. The audience includes serious collectors of applied art who know their materials, their processes, and the history of their chosen medium. Gallerists must know their wares inside out, and preferably have the maker at hand to elucidate the work. Makers cannot exhibit individually at Collect; they must be represented by a gallery, and each gallery submits to a rigorous selection process. Applications are judged on the gallery's track record, their curatorial vision, and the standard of the makers that they represent. In 2011 the work on display at Collect confirmed, once again, that Northern Irish makers are producing work of an international standard and can compete with their peers, even in this most rarefied of arenas.

Three of the makers from Northern Ireland at Collect – Jack Doherty, Karl Harron, and Derek Wilson – were

represented by the Craft Council of Ireland's National Craft Gallery. The display, curated by Ann Mulrooney, showed an all-island aesthetic that set it apart from the other galleries. 'Irish work, both north and south, in



Above / Derek Wilson, Corners and Edges series

relation to that of other countries, has a very deep engagement in the making process,' Mulrooney commented, 'and that's different to work from England which is often quite ironic or blackly humorous, or work from Europe, which tends to be very conceptual, or work from America, which tends to be very colourful or figurative. In relation to those, Irish work is very much about how the materials and the processes create the form and the structure of the pieces.'

Derek Wilson, the youngest of the makers, was featured in the UK Crafts Council's special supplement about Collect as one of a number of emerging makers to watch internationally. His simple, strong, geometric vessel forms, thrown in three sections and reassembled, ▶



Above / Derek Wilson, Void 1 and 2

▶ showed both confidence and coherence. This body of work, the Void series, displays well in groupings. The pieces are made in stoneware with engobe, which Wilson describes as: 'somewhere between a slip and a glaze'; fired repeatedly and polished after each firing. This process gives the work, rendered in muted colours, a velvety depth of surface that seems to absorb the light. The pieces are different from each other but follow the same basic form: a closed vessel with a pointed base. In this they subvert several ceramic conventions. They reference containers but cannot actually contain and, although it is usually considered polite for ceramic forms to rest on a stable base, they are gently pivotal. This creates a kinetic element within the work. Although the pieces do not move of their own accord, they are easily gyrated, altering their aspect and the shadows that they cast. Their solid

appearance is illusory: the pieces are hollow and do not weigh a great deal.

In contrast, Jack Doherty's monumental vessels are every bit as heavy as they seem. It takes a great deal of courage for a ceramist to demonstrate this much solidity,



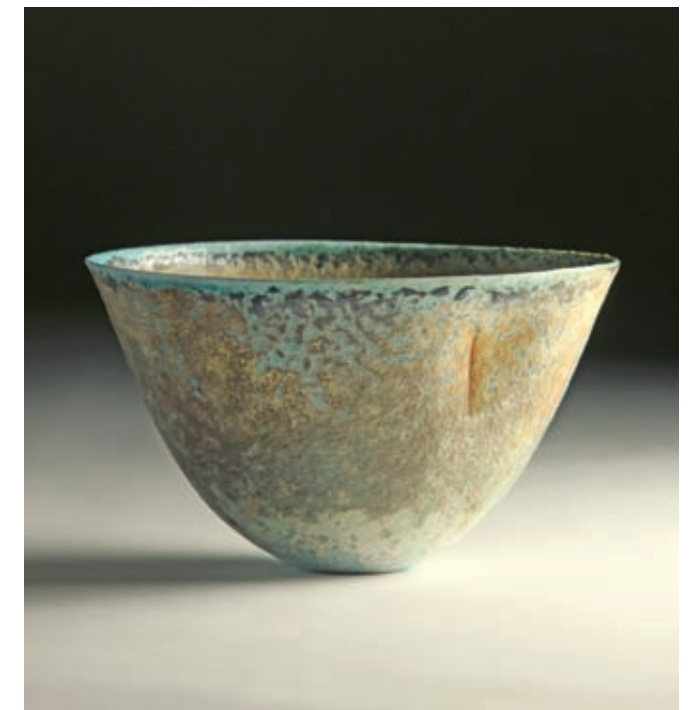
Below / Jack Doherty, Conical Bowl. Porcelain, 11x19cm



Above centre / Piece by Jack Doherty, Collect 2011. Photograph: Sylvain Deleu

Above / Jack Doherty, Wide Ribbed Bowl. Porcelain, 13x32cm

especially in porcelain which is conventionally used to express delicacy and perfection rather than heft. Doherty has different reasons for porcelain. It has, because of the high temperature of its firing, a surface potential that other clays cannot offer: a background for colour or, in the way of Korean moon jars, the expression of imperfectness. His pieces rest lightly on their bases. 'They are heavy', he says, 'in the way that fishing boats are heavy, but still float. There's a contradiction between weight and weightlessness.' His work is not glazed: the pieces are coloured with copper carbonate and soda-fired, a process that creates a chain of chemical reactions and a maritime palette: grey like pitted stone, rusty like weathered metal, occasional sky blue. Some of the pieces deliberately reference the landscape of Cornwall, where he lives. Their surfaces are deeply scored in the manner of the stone slab paving on the steep streets of Cornish towns. There are various reasons for breaking the surface of a form: this is so that you can keep your footing. The scored marks act as focal points, grounding the work by giving it a visual foreground. The vessels ▶





**Above** / Karl Harron, Tomb Vessel #309 (containing artifact). Glass sculpture

► need to offer visual stability because of the depth of their questioning: they question bowl forms, vessel forms, and the place of the utensil in the decorative world. And yet they have a sense of humanity, the possibility of daily domestic interaction.

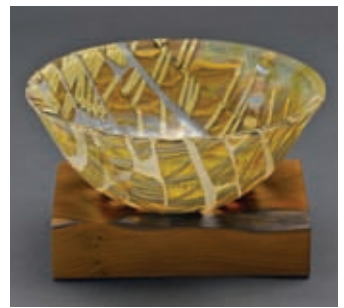
Karl Harron introduced a new series of work at Collect 2011 which, like his earlier work, is based on a chemical reaction within the body of the glass. But, while previously two types of glass interacted to create a grey opacity, in the new work Harron has used precious metal silver encased

between layers of reactive Bullseye glass. On one side of the work, possibly the inside of the bowl, light is reflected as gun metal blue; on the other, the outside, the light is transmitted so that a regal amber appears within the glass to much the same effect as the golden flow of light through a church window. This effect is created using a technique similar to that of appliqué, made more difficult by the properties of the material: glass is an insulator of heat, silver a conductor, and bringing them together creates a potential instability. The piece is formed as a flat disc, two layers thick. 'Glass is happiest at 6mm



**Above** / Karl Harron, Dolmen Cairn #309 (containing artifact). Glass sculpture

**Below** / Karl Harron, Temple Offering #0110. Bullseye reactive glass. Diameter 190x75mm



**Above** / Karl Harron, Tomb Vessel #0110a. Bullseye reactive glass. Diameter 190x75mm

in volume', Harron says. 'You have to remember that it is a liquid. I follow the material. I do not lead the material. But I do push its boundaries. I break it when it is still flat. I literally drop it, but not from a great height. I reassemble the pieces and form them into a vessel. I have to let the material recuperate. The material has a memory and I am fogging that memory to let it become something else.'

The work of Doherty, Harron, and Wilson was shown alongside that of the glass artist, Róisín de Buitléar of Dublin; the ceramists Sara Flynn of County Cork and Marcus O'Mahony of County Waterford; and with furniture by Yaffe Mays of Connemara and Nest Furniture, an Irish company based in South-West France. ●

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