

WAYPOINT

Vessels by Jack Doherty



Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It's about emotions, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there.

Lucy Lippard, *Lure of the Local*.





WAYPOINT

Vessels by Jack Doherty

A multi-site exhibition connecting with the
unique heritage of a fishing community

NEW CRAFTSMAN GALLERY, ST IVES
5 September – 9 October 2015

ST IVES SEPTEMBER FESTIVAL
12 – 26 September 2015

NC

NEW CRAFTSMAN GALLERY

24 Fore Street · St Ives · Cornwall TR26 1HE
01736 795652 · www.newcraftsmanstives.com

Introduction

The navigational reference *Waypoint* is the title for a multi-site exhibition of soda-fired porcelain vessels by Irish potter Jack Doherty. The core of the exhibition is hosted by the New Craftsman Gallery with an element of the work extending beyond the traditional gallery space to key sites in the harbour town of St Ives. *Waypoint* marks a personal journey and draws on Doherty's childhood experiences as the last in a generation of fishermen. The exhibition highlights the heritage of a fishing community engaging visitors and local audiences with these historic landmarks.

Waypoint is presented in three contrasting locations; the ancient mariners chapel of St Nicholas and St Leonard and the fishermen's shelters. By placing Doherty's vessel forms within a specific site, the intention is to create a thoughtful space in which to contemplate the work with sensitivity to the context of place.

Sarah Frangleton, Curator



New Craftsman Gallery

Since the New Craftsman was established in 1962 by potter Janet Leach, ceramics have been central to the work shown here. Responsibility for such an illustrious crafts history comes with ownership of this historic gallery, which recently celebrated its fiftieth year and continues to show ceramics and studio pottery by some of the UK's leading makers.

The gallery's relationship with Jack Doherty's work arose initially from our long association with the Leach Pottery. As Creative Director at the Pottery's relaunch in 2008, Jack designed the new soda-fired Leach tableware and the New Craftsman became the St Ives town centre gallery for these important new pieces.

In 2012 New Craftsman's fiftieth anniversary year coincided with Jack's fifth year at the Leach Pottery. We were delighted to host his first major show in St Ives as part of the 2012 September Festival, and are equally proud to be showing this year's unique and contextually relevant exhibition of work.

This multi-site exhibition of beautifully crafted and deeply poignant works, created as a collaboration between one of Cornwall's foremost potters – a man born into the culture of fishing – and St Ives' longest standing craft gallery, brings together the key cultural and economic strands of the town's past and present, and points the way to a greater understanding of this area's precious heritage.

Ylenia Haase, Gallery Director



Signposts, Stars and Boulders

Central to the *Waypoint* project is the relationship Jack Doherty has with St Ives. Relocating to Cornwall and the harbour town brought him back to the sea. He describes the exhibition as marking a point on a personal journey.

'I was born into a family of fishermen who lived and worked on the north coast of Ireland. My father and grandfather were harbourmaster there. As a child the harbour was the centre of my universe; a fascinating space charged with emotional content that shaped my world.'

Defined somewhere between land and carved from the sea the harbour is not only a place of refuge, shelter and sanctuary but also a place of transition and danger. Once a thriving fishing port, the sea and tin mining were the dominant trades and the harsh livelihood of the people in St Ives.

Waypoint focuses on three distinct and contrasting locations: the ancient chapels of St Nicholas and St Leonard and the fishermen's shelter, Rose Lodge. These are not places of grand designs or with illusions of wealth and prosperity. They are not museums or galleries with their hushed tones underpinned by academic gravitas. These are places used every day by people whose lives are grounded in the community. In these potent spaces the pots speak for themselves displayed on ledges, windowsills and mantelpieces. The exhibition highlights the heritage of the fishing community connecting audiences with these landmarks and narratives of faith, courage and epic voyages.

The Rose Lodge is a simple wooden building close to the Sloop Inn, along with the Shore Shelter and the Shamrock these are the meeting-places used by St Ives fishermen. Since the turn of the last century men have gathered around the stove waiting for the tide and watching the weather. It is a living archive of photographs, a place to share a yarn and exchange gossip.





The Rose Lodge is a domestic place and Doherty reminisces: 'As a child I remember my parents' kitchen, listening to the shipping forecast on the radio and watching my father carve net needles in its warmth.'

The work shown here is a collection of cups, each one individual in form, connecting us with the nature of the inhabitants of the lodge and the basic hospitality it offers.

Historically, faith is integral to the vulnerable daily life of a fishing community. Each of the chapels contains pieces relating to the spiritual and fragile reality of survival from the sea. The ancient chapel of St Nicholas is dedicated to mariners. A sacred site has marked this spot since 'time immemorial'. An isolated landmark on the prominent headland of the town it is a focal point in the landscape. Only accessible on foot it stands overlooking the Atlantic Ocean battered by the weather and winds. Celebrations and blessings are still performed and this is reflected in the group of work installed here. Within the sparse granite interior the embracing Cradle vessel and monumental Guardian forms mirror our need for security and protection.

The tiny fishermen's chapel of St Leonard stands at the shore end of Smeaton's Pier. Easily overlooked and tucked in as it is between the Harbourmaster's office and the public conveniences. It is an understated, austere and solemn space of contemplation, solitude and prayer. Here are layers of memory. A miscellany of ephemera and seemingly disregarded objects are displayed in a dusty glass cabinet; a solitary fisherman's boot, lost, found or abandoned, intricate models of old luggers lovingly constructed, faded newspaper cuttings and a simple prayer: 'pray some fishes and a dry safe bed.' In the shadows a plaque lists the names of sixty-one local men and their vessels lost at sea. In this place of remembrance Doherty has made a group of vessel forms titled *Fleet* to commemorate each of them.





ANDREW GEORGE M
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tony Farrell
Secretary Rose Lodge
12 Parc Beau Terrace
St Ives
Cornwall
TR26 1EA

Dear Tony,

HIRE OF THE ROSE LODGE AND SHORE

I write to enclose two cheques...



Prayer for St Leonard's Chapel

Temper the wind the wave the tide
Faith my lodestone you my guide
Blessed were the fishers so 'tis said
Pray some fishes and a dry safe bed



The solo exhibition at the New Craftsman Gallery is a collection of new work drawing together the concepts linking the three locations. As well as the larger individual pieces there are clusters of finely thrown pieces 'squared' into family groupings and subtle variations on his signature conical vessels. Simon Olding has referred to Doherty as a 'mariner' potter and evocatively describes his work: 'These pots are of the sea and the land and the travels and imaginings which take place there. These expressive porcelain vessels are deeply imprinted with the memory of the past and layered with aesthetic, visceral and spiritual meaning. Scarred and marked by the turbulent atmosphere in the kiln, Doherty often refers to his carved elemental pots as 'survivors'.

Doherty envisages a community of objects embedded with ancient stories and contemporary narratives. Reinvented as a contemporary art form these 'survivor' vessels inhabit spaces defined by light, shadow and darkness, and communicate in a way which neither painting or abstract sculpture can. No longer purely utilitarian or intended for conventional use a new series of conceptual vessel forms respond to the emotional connection with inhabited spaces which French philosopher Gaston Bachelard describes as 'places of intimacy and intensity.'

Referencing archetypal, anonymous pots from pre-history Doherty's work considers the shifting nature of usefulness and functionality; pots for holding, storing or containing. Since the beginnings of civilisation mankind has created clay vessels for practical application. Ceramic forms once our physical protectors by storing food and keeping us safe through winters have now become guardians of ideas and emotions.

The vessel can convey complex emotional or figurative elements rooted in the work made more resonant by being seen in evocative intimate spaces. Physical objects can also act as 'waypoints', both as material and visual reminders of people, place and time. In her book, *Evocative Objects; things we think with*, Professor Sherry Turkle outlines one of the functions of objects as a 'marker' or 'companions' to our emotional lives. She describes how 'objects can connect thoughts, ideas and people bringing together intellect and emotion.'

Objects then can be triggers, activators or perhaps agitators for thought, reaction or contemplation. They are signposts, stars, and boulders, to mark and guide the way. Connecting pots and people *Waypoint* marks a time and place in a personal journey reflected in the history of a fishing community dominated by the sea.

Sarah Frangleton



Where does spirit live? Inside or outside
Things remembered, made things, things unmade?
What came first, the seabird's cry or the soul
Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things*.



The Sea Roads

The effort to drag craft kicking and screaming into the museum context can sometimes backfire. Craft does not do well in captivity. The vessel in particular, with its roots so deeply embedded in human interaction, is not best served by the cold remoteness of the plinth. The white cube gallery designed to create thinking space around an object can become counterproductive when the object was made to 'talk' to its surroundings.

In the small fishermen's lodges and chapels around the harbour there is a conversation between the work and its surroundings: its textures and colours reflected in stone and rust and weathered timbers. *Waypoint* marks a point in a personal journey and connects memory, time and place.

I came to St Ives as the first Lead Potter at the refurbished Leach Pottery and currently work independently from my studio in Mousehole. It was my father who spoke about the sea-roads which can be both real and imagined, and it felt as though I had come full circle, from the North Eastern coast of Ireland to the tip of South West Cornwall. I had come back to the sea and my work had been brought back to its roots.

I come from a place of uncompromising sea, relentless wind and endless sky. There are islands to the east, Rathlin, Islay and Skye, but nothing to the west except the setting sun. My family were fishermen, sailors and boat-builders who made their livelihood in one way and another from the sea. I was to follow my own path, but as a boy making had always been integral to daily life. I remember my father and grandfather knitting fishing nets in the winter kitchen, the loose ends tied to the warm brass taps of the range. They carved their own tools, wooden needles with a spike to twist and knot the twine, and a gauge to measure the size of the mesh. They made lobster pots too, of rough willow basketry on a wooden base weighted with round sea stones. In the fishing season the men were gone for days on end.





In these small kitchens, windows steamed, the clamour of housework quietened as the wireless read the shipping forecast; Rockall, Malin, Hebrides, the women knew the language, its codes and the measurement of wind. Faith is necessary in a fishing community.

It is from this starting point that I made the work for *Waypoint*. The porcelain vessel forms have now become guardians of ideas and emotions, occupying domestic spaces in a different way. We see them in evocative places where they change with the darkness and light and connect with them in moments coloured by our own emotional state. They carry with them messages of everyday life and tell us powerful stories from places without words.

Displayed in St Leonard's, a tiny granite chapel dedicated to fishermen is *Fleet*, a family of vessels, small, fragile and vulnerable, each commemorating the life of St Ives men lost at sea. Like the Cornish luggers, jumbos or mackerel boats they are made to a pattern, each one altered by design or accident. Some are loved, tidy and smart, others are shabby, neglected, bearing the harshness of work and wearing the sound of the spray.

Jack Doherty





Jack Doherty

Jack Doherty was born in Co Derry and studied Ceramics at the Ulster College of Art and Design, Belfast. On graduating he worked at Kilkenny Design Workshops before establishing his studio first in Co Armagh and then in Herefordshire. From 2008-2013 Doherty was the first Lead Potter and Creative Director appointed at the refurbished Leach Pottery in St Ives, Cornwall.

Doherty has been involved in promoting contemporary ceramics on many levels. He was Chair of the Craft Potters Association for twelve years, a founder member and Chair of the organising committee of Ceramic Art London and guest editor of *Ceramic Review*. His work is exhibited internationally and is represented in many public collections. He currently works independently from his studio in Mousehole.

Made from porcelain, his vessel forms are thrown then carved and shaped to reflect the fluidity of the material and physicality of making. The elemental colour and surface texture are created by the fusion of fire and soda in the intense heat of the kiln, leaving behind a subtle palette of smoky grey, lemon, russet and turquoise.

Sarah Frangleton Independent Curator

Sarah Frangleton studied Art and Design in a Social Context at Dartington College of Art. As a performer and maker she has toured extensively with the acclaimed visual theatre company Horse and Bamboo. She completed her MA in Curatorial Practice at University College Falmouth in 2012. Recent projects include *Moon Jar: Contemporary Translations* at the Korean Cultural Centre, London and *Scattered Plots & Routes We Take*, Newlyn Art Gallery. *Waypoint* is her third collaboration with Jack Doherty. Other projects include, *A Place in the World* 2012 and *Harbouring* 2014.

As a curator she looks for alternative spaces to engage an audience. She is interested in the 'theatre of space' as a site for creating interventions and encounters. These itinerant places can be a catalyst for the unexpected making new connections and discoveries. The interaction of objects within a physical space creates a dialogue with the viewer and informs the interpretation of the work.

Ylenia Haase Gallery Director, New Craftsman Gallery

The New Craftsman Gallery has built a reputation as one of the foremost galleries in St Ives for promoting contemporary ceramics showcasing work by leading UK potters and artists.

Respected for its painting, sculpture and quality studio pottery, over the last half century The New Craftsman has gained an international reputation amongst discerning art and craft collectors. It has long been regarded as one of the most important spaces for contemporary artists in St Ives and continues to show original paintings and pottery by leading Cornish and British artists alongside a varied range of contemporary crafts.

Waypoint: vessels by Jack Doherty is curated by Sarah Frangleton. The exhibition will be on show at the site-specific locations during the St Ives September Festival, 12 – 26 Sept and opens at the New Craftsman Gallery 5 Sept – 9 October 2015. See newcraftsmanstives.com or dohertyporcelain.com for related talks and events.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to St Ives Town Council, to Tony Farrell and the members of the Rose Lodge and to everyone who have given their time in support of the *Waypoint* project.

Visual Documentation

Photography: Rebecca Peters; rebeccapeters.co.uk

Historical Images

by kind permission of the St Ives Archive

ISBN: 978-0-9934009-0-2



NC