

Linda Styles Artist Statement

I have always been subversive by nature, this trait, whether put there by nature or nurture, has led me to visit unusual situations and places throughout my life. Clues as to what this life has been and still is are evident in my art practice, if looked for hard enough. I tend to see life as a lurid soap opera, in which I play a key part (Leo traits). I am seduced by excess and have been drawn, all my life, to difference in ways of seeing and doing.

I have developed my experimental approach to clay over the last 16 years, a long and arduous apprenticeship, aided by my intention to be progressive, perverse imagination, intuition, skill of the hand and eye, physical strength and limitless perseverance, using heat works and chemical concoctions as an effective vehicle with which to make mainly charming, superficially naïve and sometimes hideous popular ornament that carries an integrity of purpose that enhances homes and lives.

People tend to respond to my work primarily on an emotional level, as opposed to conceptual and intellectual. This is my intention. My practice is underpinned by deep thought process and self-critique. I choose to walk the very fine line between perceived good and bad taste, influenced by my own memories of nuclear dysfunctional family life in 50's and 60's London suburbs.

One of my selling points is the fact that I am becoming increasingly difficult to box and categorise, which actually allows me a freedom of expression that is rare within the narrow confines of the craft arena. My sense of colour, although advanced, is ever so slightly skew-whiff. I like to jar the eye with saturated bright and gaudy mismatched overflows of synthetic looking colour, acid opaques contrasted to the most delicate 'Boudoir' pastels, the marks consciously gestural and free, but always, without fail, structured and confined by thin, nervous little scratchy lines, over and over again. Multi fired, sometimes as many as 8 times. I push the materials to the absolute edge of their limits, just as I do myself.

I am able to distort and adapt the historically formal and orthodox language of clay, staying loyal to this elaborate, non cost effective way of working for many years.

All this complexity is seemingly? randomly placed on an assortment of clay surfaces, which become 2D tile assemblages, vessel and object based forms, all with elements of figuration attached to them.

I have been purposely referencing the 60's organic abstract modernist school for the last few years. Just lately, I have been producing a range of ceramics under the umbrella title of 'Precious Peninsula', little ceramic manifestations of reflective nostalgia using mixed memories of early 1960's holidays in St. Ives and Boscastle as source. We used to travel all the way down from London in the back of my Dad's black cab.

'This Dream That is Cornwall' – I am able to travel back 40 years and remember how it was then, as seen and experienced by a strange misfit of a child on the brink of extraordinary times.

I make a point of daydreaming; usually lingering in the 60's/70's which is when my life was at its most vivid, whilst reclusively and obsessively working in my studio.

I like to think that I am providing my marketplace with nifty little post-modern interpretations of 20th/21st century popular culture. My style being more to do with kitsch and irony than banal copyist reproduction of 20th century modernist style. The words 'charming' and 'hideous' are often used to describe my work. I regard both as compliments.

The ceramic process is unique in the excitement of possibility that comes with using heat works and chemical formulas. I am obsessed not only by the process but also, the permanence, brilliance and richness of surface that is unique to Ceramic methodologies.

I am also particularly interested in the fact that potters (ceramists, makers, designers), oh so many labels! continue to use traditional techniques as a vehicle for expression. Ceramic process, has throughout history/prehistory, carried the potential for expressive visual surface, using heat works and chemical formula's to achieve the brilliance and richness of vitrified, fused glass surface that is uniquely associated with this special art/craft medium.

I have decided to focus on the figurative object for my submission to "Spontaneous Combustion". I have planned to title each piece using 'Mills and Boon' sentence constructs that allude to best-sellerised and popularised modern romantic love. I will be referencing the past in terms of textual/technical/visual comparative viewpoints. I shall be looking at the concept of romantic love as we see it today, compared to as it was seen in 1971, a memorable year. Strictly speaking, this is not spontaneous practice, what is? We all have our different perceptions of meanings described through spoken and written patriarchal language. This language struggles to describe the intangible, which is the quality that I am aiming for.

I compulsively crave order in an increasingly chaotic world. I am almost ritualistic in my preparation of physical and mental space. These patterns of behaviour are intrinsic to my art practice, so I have decided to make a feature of my quirks and foibles, such a relief. I have always preferred my work to be seen in assemblage and/or installation terms, an amalgamation of parts that are meant to be viewed as one cohesive, disjointed and juxtaposed whole.

I am very, very excited about the prospect of playing a part in Spontaneous Combustion and proud to be associated with this project and all of those involved.