

# KATE FITZHARRIS

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"I love how ceramic objects can sit still whilst carrying their history of geological processes."

RDS GALLERY



This series celebrates the many clays I have been working with lately—some from Aotearoa, New Zealand and many from my residency in Shigaraki, Japan last year. I like to work with the innate colours of the different clays themselves, which is then added to by the firing process, which can bring another layer of variation and nuance depending on how the flame travels through the kiln.

I hand build each piece, my process often involves circling - rotating the form as I build it up, or rolling beads in my hand. I hope to leave a sense of touch on the works. Clay is a material that I think really invites touch. A deliciously soft, malleable medium when it has the right balance of mineral with water, it will only let you work it for a certain length of time, before it becomes hard and you have to stop. 'Trusting our hands' is important and I am often guided by what my hands feel when working—how thin is this wall of the vessel, how does this feel—before looking with my eyes at what is taking shape.

The necklaces came about by thinking of the objects we live with and how we form relationships with them. They partake in our daily lives, and become important to us. We leave them at home but also carry them around on our bodies as they remind us of people and times past. Jewellery is a way we can carry objects with us, have them with us as we venture away from our homes into the world. They can also be charms to protect us.

**Kate Fitzharris** (b. 1974, Wellington, New Zealand), completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Dunedin School of Art, with a major in ceramics, in 1994. She has held a number of residencies, including: Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park [Japan], 2019; Tylee Cottage [Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui] (2018); and Doris Lusk Residency [Risingholme Community Centre, Christchurch] (2017). Among her other honours, she was a finalist for the 2019 Wallace Arts Trust Awards, and received Portage Ceramic Merit Awards in 2014, 2010 and 2002. The Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park Foundation, the Dowse, the James Wallace Arts Trust, and the Waikato Museum include her work in their collections. Her ceramic figures have been shown at galleries across New Zealand, including solo exhibitions at Masterworks Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, the Lopdell House Gallery and the Blue Oyster Art Project Space, among others.

Kate's primary medium is ceramics, though she also explores the use of 'found materials', such as vintage fabric and wild clay. Typically constructing small-scale, often anthropomorphic, objects, the artist asks viewers to look closely, to examine her diminutive creations in all their intricate detail of surface, colour and shape — ultimately to reflect upon how contemporary culture rarely encourages us to engage with the subtleties of our environment and its ever-proliferating collection of mass-produced, characterless objects.

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