

In the Margins of our Minds

Site-responsive installations around Dublin Castle

Artists:

British Corrina Thornton (b. 1978) lives and works in Bergen
 corrinathornton.info

Danish Katrine Køster Holst (b. 1979) lives and works in Drammen/Vestfossen
 koesterholst.com

Norwegian Lillian Tørlen (b. 1975) lives and works in Oslo
 lilliantorlen.no

Curators and editors:

Gjertrud Steinsvåg, Director - International Projects, Norwegian Crafts
 norwegiancrafts.no

Susan Holland, Education & Outreach Officer, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland
 dccoi.ie

Design:

Hege Henriksen

Venue:

The Dublin Castle - The Coach House

The Dublin Castle - The Morrison Room

The Dublin Castle - The Courtyard Archway & The Chapel

Date:

8 – 25 September 2014

Supported by:

The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

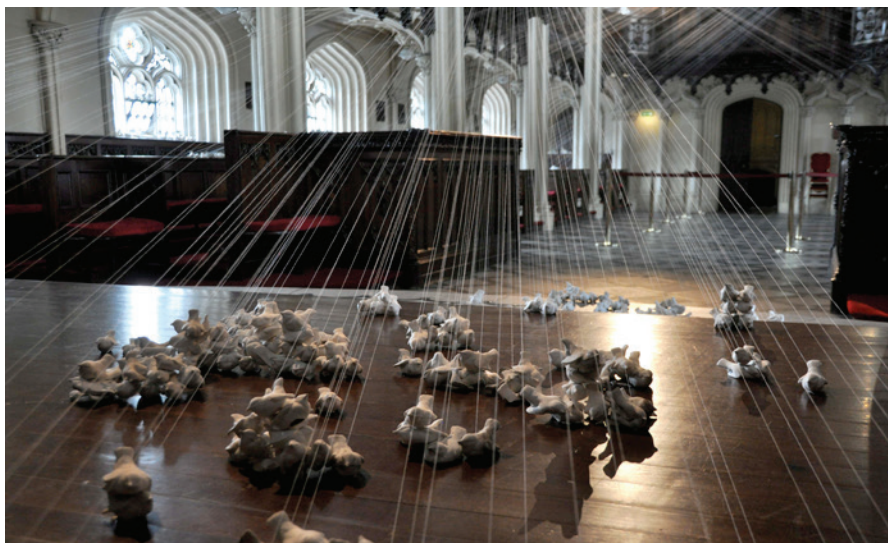
The Norwegian Embassy in Dublin

Design & Crafts Council of Ireland

Office of Public Works

In the Margins of our Minds is a project, presented to 23 000 viewers at Dublin Castle in 2014, in conjunction with the International Academy of Ceramic's biennial general assembly. As part of the Dublin Craft Trail, a number of international projects took place throughout the city, and Norwegian Crafts was invited to curate an exhibition of ceramic works. Rather than presenting Norwegian art works in an exhibition space, the curators Gjertrud Steinsvåg and Susan Holland worked with three selected artists to develop site-responsive projects. Evolving ideas within each artists practice have been reconsidered to address the nuances of three very different spaces within Dublin Castle: the Coachhouse; the Chapel; the Courtyard archway.

In order for the artistic results to act as dialogues between the three artists and the city of Dublin, the curators worked with a four-step concept consisting of a site visit, studio work, installation mounting and the end result of in-situ installations. The concept was a structure like that of public art projects, making the art project accessible to a wide range of audiences visiting Dublin Castle.



The artists Corrina Thornton, Katrine Køster Holst and Lillian Tørlen all have a background as ceramic artists. Each holds a deep knowledge of the material and actively utilizes clay in their artistic practices. Still, the strongest similarity between the three is a sustained interest in how their objects relate to the given surroundings. This imbues their work with a striking presence – almost as if the artworks have human volition or personality. The conversation between material and space appear somewhat sudden and surprising, and enable us viewers to reflect upon how we define ourselves in the context of the world around us.



The title, *In the Margins of our Minds*, suggests that we experience and process of the installations as we do with a book: by using the margins – noting and reflecting - we process and interpret the given surroundings, seeking to identify the truth or facts as they are presented to us.



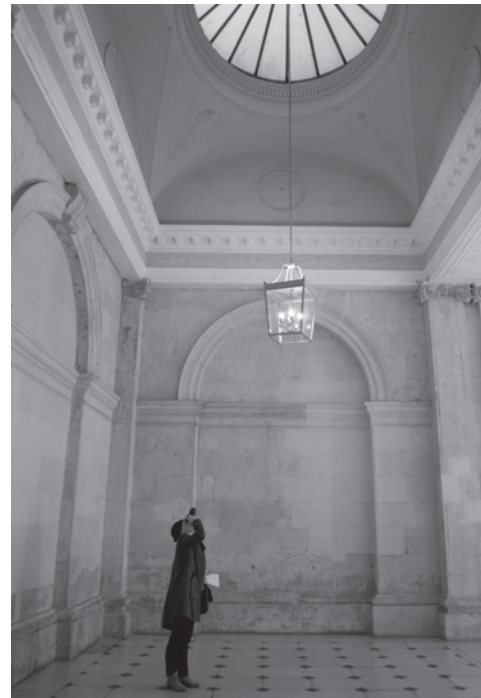
Top: Katrine Køster Holst, *Since Thursday*
 Left: Corrina Thornton, *The Coach House will become an echo for memories*
 Right: Lillian Tørlen, *Resonance*



It was crucial for the artists to explore and investigate the potential contexts for their own project. In February 2014, curators and artists met in Dublin for two intensive days. The team of five made site visits to a shortlist of venues throughout Dublin: galleries, project spaces, outdoor venues, the city hall, churches, etc. On each site-visit the team was met by venue staff telling them about the history of the place, and discussing practical details concerning the venues as potential locations for clay projects. The two days program brought to the fore the artists' personal reactions to the spaces, aesthetically as well as conceptually.



Katrine Køster Holst, Lillian Tørlen,
Corrina Thornton, Tina Byrne (Ceramics
Ireland), and Michael Moore (Assembly
Chair IAC 2014)



Left: Lillian Tørlen discovers the arch way of Dublin Castle. Top: Meeting Andrew Smith at Saint Patricks Cathedral. Bottom: Katrine Køster Holst in the City Hall



After intensive days in Dublin, the artists went back to their studios to further develop ideas. Different strategies were selected: Katrine Køster Holst immediately decided to re-imagine one of her installations from 2009 in the Chapel, whereas Lillian Tørlen had a couple of ideas for different venues, and needed time to further research the history of the spaces and clarify technical possibilities and obstacles. Coincidentally all three artists chose to work within Dublin Castle. Perhaps not very surprising, considering the significant role the Castle has played for the City of Dublin throughout its 800 years' history. The site has stood witness to some of the most pivotal events in the country's history, ever since its founding of the first Celtic settlement in the first century A. D. to every Presidential inauguration since the foundation of the State. Today, this prestigious city center site is host to state-of-the-art conference and dining facilities.

Katrine Køster Holst, Vestfossen



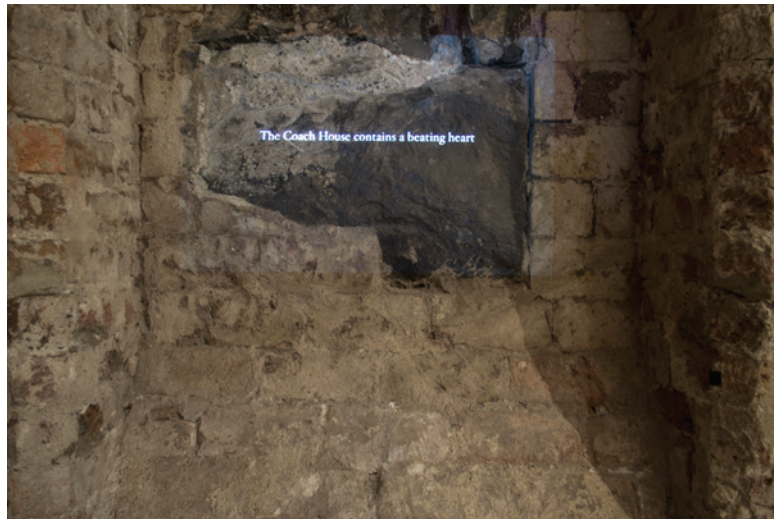
Corrina Thornton, Bergen

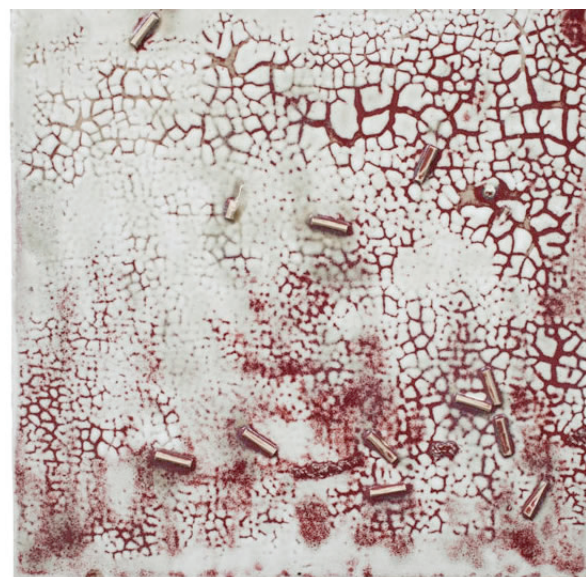
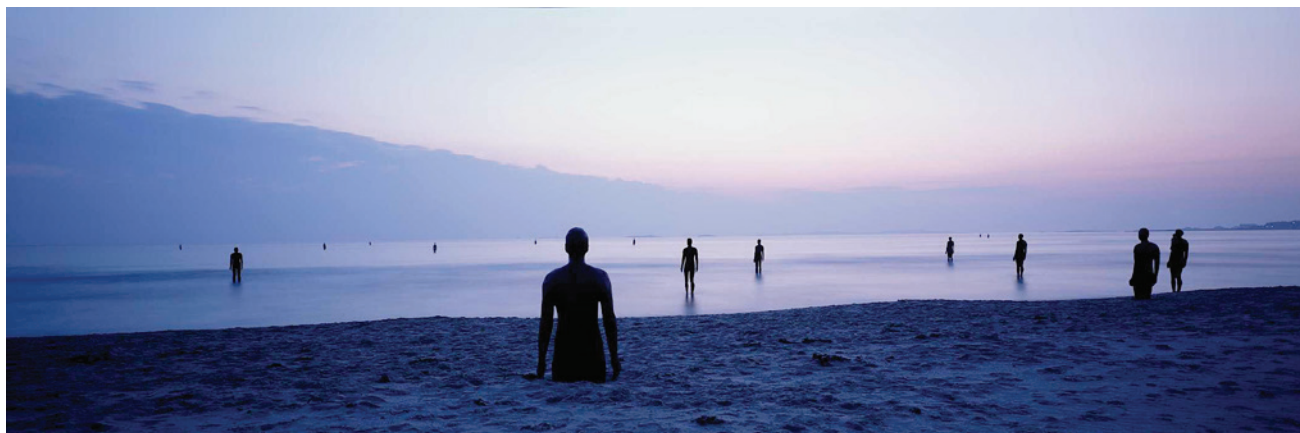


Lillian Tørlen, Oslo



Focused and thorough mounting allows space for the artist to locate and shape the conversation between brought materials and objects with the selected venue. Undoubtedly Thornton, Tørlen and Køster Holst each demonstrate strong qualities as artists. In particular they share a deep sensitivity to nuances of the environment and a highly tuned awareness of how to embed objects within the context of the physical surroundings. As is the nature of working with site reactive installations, the artwork itself is totally dependent on technical details, in order to convey the story that the artists aim to share.





The Chapel Royal

Køster Holst started as a research fellow at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, autumn 2014. Her artistic practice has a strong base in geology and material processes and her method is based on the combination of scientific thoroughness and coincidence. Previous works like *Red Soil* (2013) are strongly a methodical research of how the natural processes of material and landscape create artistic results. *Red Soil* is originally a ceramic plate that functioned as base support for producing large ceramic sculptures. Such a plate follows a sculpture throughout its production stages and reduces the risk of damaged. By the last stage, the plate, which is the discarded, contains traces of the processes the clay object underwent on its way to becoming a ceramic sculpture. Having this in mind, *Since Thursday* is not a very typical Køster Holst piece of art. The nearly 2000 porcelain birds appear more poetic as a narrative work, and reminds more of Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* (2010) or Anthony Gormley's hundred casted iron men in the work *Another Place* (1997).

Top: Anthony Gormley, *Another Place*.
 Left: Katrine Køster Holst, *Red Soil*
 Below: Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*.



In Køster Holst's work *Since Thursday* she has elected to re-imagine a vast flock of porcelain birds, moving throughout and landing taut within the stunning setting of the Chapel Royal. From the vaulted ceilings, thousands of silk and cotton threads fall, like rays of light, connecting with each bird. These threads define the formation of this flock of birds, while also interacting with the space and architecture of the Chapel. Køster Holst's poetic installation was first shown in 2009, after her residency at the porcelain flatware company, Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik. During the residency, Køster Holst was given the opportunity to work with the molds of *Fossekalen* (the European Dipper, known as the Norwegian national bird), a porcelain souvenir made by Norwegian designer Johan Sirnes (1883-1966) around 1930.

The process brought Køster Holst's attention to the complex meanings of time, rhythm and deformation during the casting process, and also gave each of her own casted birds their own shape and identity.

Below: Johan Sirnes, *Fossekalen*



In this perspective, Johan Sirnes' focus on the individual European Dipper has turned into a focus on the one vast flock of individual birds, which are constantly on the move to yet another place.

Clare Twomey's installation *Trophy* (2006), with 4000 Wedgewood birds at V&A Museum, comes to mind. Twomey encouraged the audience to choose a bird, take it away, provide a new individual life for the chosen bird, and tell their story through images and words. In Køster Holst's flock, however, the birds are strictly connected with the silk and cotton thread that suggests a strong ambiguity concerning how we relate individually and/or collectively to people around us.

The architecture and light in the Chapel Royal provides, quite literally, a religious context for the flock of birds landed there, soon to fly off again. The Chapel aligns with the emotional, nearly romantic, aspect of this Køster Holst work, and provides a perfect place for us to reflect on the faces and rituals of life

The Coach House

Corrina Thornton's work, *The Coach House will become an echo for memories*, was a work developed on-site specifically responding to the location. Thornton connected concretely with the history of the Coach House, built to store the horses but also to block the view of the slums of Dublin before the Queens visit in the 1800s. Thornton's work consists of a drawings, text work and an installation made with materials that relate to the coach house's past and also her own. The drawing and the text show Thornton's system of mapping the physical elements of the room as well as the symbolic and more subtle meanings that the Coach House has represented. Her "memory objects", each piece of matter having personal significance, includes horse hair, brick from her mother's house in Wales and sheep wool from her pet sheep growing up.

The Coach House will become an echo for memories is a work that follows Thornton's method from previous artworks like *I thought Laughter would flow like Water* (2014). This project presents a construction of created and found objects and materials, where the audience can climb a ladder to put their own wooden ball into

Top: Corrina Thornton, *I thought Laughter would flow like Water*.

Below: Corrina Thornton, *The Coach House will become an echo for memories*, detail.





the construction, and witness the coincidental trail of the ball. The trail tells about how history, coincidental events and other people create a crucial premise for the path of our individual future. It is with a sigh of relief that we can acknowledge that no matter how hard we try, we do not hold all power within our own lives.

As she often does in her art works, Thornton gives us a clue within the title that refers to a personal point of view in which she herself is situated or hoping to understand. Thornton's starting point was to find out whether the Coach House's old memories would push forward and exchange with her own, leading to a unity between them. The building tells a story of horses/people, behind/front, disguise, pretense, illusion and concealment. Thornton's complex conversation of memories points out the present and the future by claiming that it is not just buildings that change, but that we also change in response to our environment and to the situations we find ourselves in.

Corrina Thornton, *The Coach House will become an echo for memories.*





The Court Yard Archway

Lillian Tørlen works sensitively with space in her practice. *Resonance* is a ream of paper caught by the wind, strewn and caught momentarily on the walls and crevasses of the archway between the two courtyards in Dublin Castle. Tørlen uses such concrete visual information and playfully manipulates the physical surroundings, which causes us to wonder; “what on earth happened here?”

Germinal Structure (2011) *Dissonance* (2013) are other examples of Tørlen’s strong ability to easily and immediately catch our attention.

Reflecting on the fact that the Dublin Castle for 800 years has been a site for important events and decisions, Tørlen’s work *Resonance* is a result of how she responds to the archway as a space where nobody dwells, but rather drifts through from one place to another.

Left: Lillian Tørlen, *Dissonance*
Right: Lillian Tørlen, *Germinal Structure*



Poetically, Tørlen's work sought to pay homage to all those who have passed by, considering their individuality and the personal stories they carry. At the same time, the simplicity of the almost weightless porcelain paper underlines the contrast of the castle's enduring structure and hardness, and Dublin's forceful rain and wind.

It is very tempting to mention a romantic or comic association to the flying papers: as a scene from a romantic movie or as an illustration of total chaos and impossible tasks, that certainly express a common perception of our hectic age. Considering the important agreements and the political power wielded within Dublin Castle throughout history, one can easily imagine the importance of what may have been written on the papers and the nervous realization that after all that effort, all had blown away.

Whatever story the papers contain or represent, the attention given to the archway made us stop and gaze, and reflect upon the stories yet to come.





Daily guided tours tell an established history of Dublin Castle throughout its 800 year old history. The three projects within *In the Margins of our Minds* can be read as contemporary comments on this story from artists outside of Ireland. Dublin Castle's visitors, whether interested in art or not, will still have to reflect on how the artistic interventions relate to the perspective of their tourist guides.

Based on our individual knowledge and references, we experience the information about the aesthetics and history of Dublin Castle and contextualize it – in the margins of our minds - in order to learn something new. Tørlen, Thornton and Køster Holst have made artworks with a particular quietness, which invites the spectators to enjoy the aesthetics of it, while reflecting on their own memories and future.



While the three artists each devised and developed their own project to inhabit separate spaces, there is a collective resonance, a dialogue whispering through the courtyards. Each installation, grounded in its location, bears witness to a tangible narrative. As visitors we ask: “what is happening here - what event have I disturbed?” In the Coach House we ask: “what is being made? The space is busy, sorting materials, building a well – have I disturbed someone’s work? Are they coming back?” In the Archway we look around, “who has lost their papers? Should I help recover them? Are they important documents or have they been left abandoned to the wind?” On finding the chapel we wonder a moment – “have these birds been here long? Will they move? Should I stay still?”

Tørlen, Thornton and Køster Holst each position the visitor as active within their own experience of the works – causing us to question our own position, and the ripples we effect in our environment.



Norwegian Crafts