

Exhibitions *The London Art Fair*, Business Design Centre, London, 14-18 January 2009; *The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF)*, Maastricht, The Netherlands, 12-23 March 2009
Web www.kmaloneceramics.clara.net

AS KATE MALONE EXPLAINS, HER DESTINY WAS TO BE A POTTER.

What If... my grandma, now 101 years old, and my mother and father (undisclosed ages) had not passed on their energy and genes that I feel lucky to have been given... Perhaps I would not have been such a hard worker.

What If... there had not been a little pottery department under the concrete E Block stairs of the large Henbury Comprehensive School in Bristol in the early 70s, with a handsome dusty pottery teacher, Mr Eveleigh – I might never have looked through that clay smeared window at the age of twelve and felt that immediate magnetic interest in the mysterious jars of powders on the shelves... Perhaps I may have become a schoolteacher instead.

What If... George Rayner, Mo Jupp, Nick Homoky and Wally Keeler had not been teaching during the four glorious years I spent on a BA course at what was then Bristol Polytechnic... Perhaps I would have still wanted to be a potter, but may have not learned as much in such an interesting and thorough way.

What If... I had not got onto the Royal College of Art Ceramics MA course for an intense learning-packed three years of studies under the wise guidance of David Hamilton and others... Perhaps I would not have undertaken the large-scale public projects that I have faced with mad, blind confidence over the past twenty-two years.

What If... I had never met Graham Inglefield in that friend's kitchen twenty-five years ago – praise that day – my partner and father of our eleven-year-old daughter Scarlet... Perhaps I would not have faced my career with such confidence as he is always there to encourage and advise. We would not have the Balls Pond Studio in Islington, London, which housed the huge kiln that made all my large architectural projects possible and gave non-profit ceramic studio spaces to over eighty ceramists over a period of twelve years. I would never have moved to set up a small secondary studio in France seven years ago, would never have met the fabulous French circle of friends and potters in Provence, and, with Graham always interested in the new, would not be now setting up a third small studio in Barcelona... and meeting and learning who knows what from September 2008.

What If... I had not met art dealer Adrian Sassoon eleven years and 1,000 large and small pots ago, who, now with Clare Beck, works so well to show decorative arts in places I could only have dreamed of, in a fashion I couldn't have dreamt of... Perhaps I would be making different, more simple pots.

What If... I had never met the amazing creative artists, my gurus, designer Zandra Rhodes and artist Andrew Logan, perhaps I would not have been inspired to follow my colourful dreams feet first with such gay abandon.

What If... I had never had students, helpers and mostly my fabulous assistant Michelle Aitken by my side to assist in the workshop... Perhaps I



would be working in a messy, disorganised studio. Without my French 'Friday afternoon circle' of ladies from the village, I would not have developed a range with complicated time-consuming surfaces like the *Magnolia Seed Heads* or the *Fizzy Atomic* series. I would never have considered them if they didn't come knocking at my window.

What If... *Ceramic Review* didn't exist... Perhaps I would never have started to use crystalline glazes inspired by an article by Derek Clarkson published in CR137.

What If... I had not been a potter at all (impossible, impossible)... Perhaps I might have become an architect, a doctor, a nurse, a teacher, a TV presenter like my father and brother, or a parent of many children like both of my brothers... Perhaps pigs might fly... I feel like I was born to pot: if it wasn't so wonderful and challenging an experience I would think it was an addiction.

What If... has reminded me that it is people that matter, and I feel so lucky to have met the ones I have, with still, hopefully, more to come. ☐

What If...

Exhibition Elizabeth Fritsch, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 2 October 2010-2 January 2011
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a museum or opening a book, strolling in the countryside, or watching a film, we are all free to draw things together in our own way and mix our own sauce.

To mark my return to live and work in London after nine years away, I am excited to be having an exhibition of new work at the Robilant + Voena gallery on Dover Street, London, arranged in conjunction with Adrian Sassoon. The pots, some of which sit in the kiln cooling a few yards away from where I now sit writing, have been influenced hugely by the three places mentioned. Some pieces were made in Barcelona or Provence, bisque-fired and packed to travel over a thousand miles for glazing and further firings in my London studio. In addition, for the first time in my life I am starting a group of six very large pots intended for the exhibition; previously I have only ever made two at a time. This is my first solo show in a very long time and I welcome all to come and taste my 'sauce'. ■

ADRIAN SASSOON REMAINS COMMITTED TO CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS.

In 1992 I was presenting my collection of early Vincennes porcelain dating from about 1747 to 1756 to Madame Fay-Hallé, Director of the French National Museum of Ceramics, as a possible museum purchase when she said, 'Well of course I know what all this is; but what is that, and, what are those?' Her finger pointed at pieces made by Gordon Baldwin, Christie Brown, and Magdalene Odundo amongst my collection of contemporary British ceramics. What if she hadn't asked me that question?

Well, I think I would have been a frustrated and certainly frustrating antique porcelain dealer if she hadn't. There isn't enough porcelain of great quality on the market, nor enough collectors in my narrow field to be busy all day long. So whilst continuing to work with eighteenth-century porcelain I have also been much occupied since then, encouraging contemporary artists to increase their creativity and employing people to make the many different strands of the dealing process come together. This culminates in creating a growing range of collectors who find discovery and acquisition great fun.

Madame Fay-Hallé was Director of the museum at Sèvres for nearly thirty years. She greatly expanded the museum's collection of ceramics and glass as well as commissioning a constant series of exhibitions. She placed great emphasis on contemporary work in her acquisitions and exhibitions, which covered centuries of the arts of the kiln. Thanks to her 1992 visit to me in London, the French nation acquired a very important range of rare documentary pieces that illustrate their royal porcelain factory's early work, and I started 'getting my hands dirty' in the contemporary field.

Quite a bit of thinking and a year of research led me to present a tiny show at the *International Ceramics Fair* in London in June 1994 – and in every year since. My aim was to present a selection of works of art by ceramic and glass artists whose work I really admired or that I felt I understood, even if the work did not all appeal to my own taste. This way, a major curator or collector in the antique field might see superb contemporary works of art at the *Ceramics Fair*. Previously, such pieces were otherwise presented throughout the year in solo shows and in galleries spread too far and wide for most people to track down during a brief annual visit to London. I had also decided, based on professional experience, that I would never establish a gallery and sit in it begging people to visit. I wanted to be in a place where large numbers of visitors would flow past, which is why I am a nomadic dealer to this day, hosting presentations at art fairs with a great supply of visitors who don't yet know what we are about to display to them.

Sixteen years down the line I have a thriving business presenting and selling contemporary works of art at many fairs (seven in 2010) in London, New York, and at the best art fair in the world, TEFAF in Maastricht. Thanks to my team, we also



enable museums to hold exhibitions and publish catalogues of works of art by our artists. The fourth artist whose work we have placed in a museum exhibition this year is Elizabeth Fritsch, whose retrospective exhibition will be at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. We also curate commercial exhibitions of new work, such as Kate Malone's upcoming solo show at Robilant + Voena in London.

There have been times in the past when I found the enterprise dispiriting, but less so these days. Publications like the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, and the *Financial Times* write supportively of our work, whilst craft journals mainly ignore but sometimes pick away at our energy and commitment. Do I care any more? Less, as it is farcical. Most artists and collectors give my team the warmest welcome and frankest exchange of thoughts. There are times when my team and I are called upon to act as amateur therapists, spending a long time unravelling the conversations and behaviour of artists and collectors. One has to learn not to do business with artists or collectors who have an older sibling who got a better lollipop than they did when they were four years old, but it isn't always apparent at first.

The most crucial thing is that we enable artists to confidently develop their work, whilst we expand their reputation and establish a good income for them. My team truly enjoys this closing of the circle by seeing the success of the works of art from kiln to cabinet. Our artists have collectively been paid several millions of pounds for their sales over the last few years. By going out to meet and make collectors on their doorstep, rather than expecting them to cross my front step, we enter their comfort zone, tweak their antennae, and sell them luxury and pleasure whilst spending time with some of the nicest people one could possibly meet.

If Madame Fay-Hallé hadn't made me think, would all of this have come to pass? Probably not. ■