Richard Slee: From Utility to Futility
by Amanda Fielding
Camberwell College of Arts / V&A Research Fellow in Craft (2007-09)
Curator of Richard Slee: From Utility to Futility

The first major solo exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum for the “Grand Wizard of Studio Ceramics,”[1] [2] Richard Slee: From Utility to Futility enables a reassessment of Slee’s important position in contemporary visual art. The exhibition is located in the V&A’s Ceramics Galleries, a sequence of vast, newly reinstalled spaces rich with material specificity and dedicated to the display and interpretation of international historical and contemporary collections. The timing is significant because Slee, who has worked professionally in the medium for thirty years, is now very consciously untying the strings that bind him to the specialised world of ceramics. In From Utility to Futility, he presents the best of both craft and fine art worlds: on the one hand, meticulously crafted objects, predominantly ceramic, that celebrate the act of making; on the other hand, the immersive experience of a fine art installation, a multi-layered narrative of meanings. Seamlessly integrating the handmade and readymade, Slee’s venture at the V&A epitomises the fluid boundaries of twenty-first century ceramic practice, reflecting the post-disciplinary condition of our times.

From Utility to Futility has had a long gestation. Early discussions with the artist in 2007 revolved around the idea of an Artist Residency, culminating in an exhibition. This would be a kind of phantom residency during which he would pay regular visits to the Museum’s collections, then vanish to his Brighton studio and make new works in response to artefacts of his choosing. Of all the objects collected by the Museum, those that most aroused his curiosity were housed in the V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green. These were toys made by parents or children. Slee is fascinated by the imaginative leaps which activate such objects. For children “the stick becomes the gun,” as he would say. A 1950s British child’s scooter made from a few bits of wood particularly caught his eye, as did certain wooden pull-along vehicles whose reductive geometric forms and grainy texture he had once mimicked in clay. Behind the scenes, inside the Museum of Childhood’s stores, he was drawn to a home-made cardboard model village in which every building and tree had been coloured in with pencils, every brick painstakingly outlined in black.

Slee’s father – an accountant by profession – had been “useless at making things and didn’t have any tools.” Consequently, the imaginative and resourceful young artist would use a stone as a hammer and once tried to make a sledge by tying pieces of wood together: experiences that partly shaped his later fascination with tools.

Not long into the V&A project, he abandoned the well-trodden “artist’s response to collections” path of enquiry while retaining his preoccupation with
making and DIY. The physical layout of the new temporary exhibition gallery, designed by architects Stanton Williams and furnished with fixed wall cases and three free-standing display cases, became a focus for his planning. He went away and came back with an entirely different concept for the exhibition.

Slee’s new strategy was to make the pared-down glass display cases an integral part of his project. Since the 1960s, artists ranging from Joseph Beuys to Eduardo Paolozzi have drawn attention to the museum vitrine as an object. Strategies have included the movement of objects within collections to reveal concealed histories; the display of personal belongings of little intrinsic worth brought in by the public; and even the exhibition of the living body.[3] James Putnam writes that the glass display case “acts as a metaphor for both captivation and appraisal, bestowing authority and power on its displayed objects. The vitrine has its origins in the church reliquary…and the museum display case has inherited this aura of veneration.”[4]

In *From Utility to Futility* Slee takes a supremely ironic approach to the notion of museum vitrine as hallowed space, using the V&A’s cases to elevate such commonplace domestic objects as carpet beaters and brooms. Disinclined to follow the precedents of, say, Richard Wentworth or Fred Wilson, who play the role of guest curator by raiding museum stores and making a personal arrangement of artefacts, Slee approached the vitrines as sympathetic environments for his own work. The show takes the form of a series of “landscapes” of objects, a description he uses to signify his rejection of the idea of object as self-standing product.

Slee had previously made creative use of museum display cases on the occasion of his solo exhibition at Tate St Ives in 2002, conceiving an “arrangement” of over one hundred ceramic pieces for the 55ft long curved showcase. Influenced by museum dioramas, *Panorama* “formed a narrative of the imagination that could be read from any point, challenging any linear reading or sequence.”

The ironic title of the V&A exhibition, *From Utility to Futility*, had been at the back of Slee’s mind for some time. Nodding to the practical and standardised designs of the British utility venture (1942-1952) and post-war austerity, this catchy rhyming title is open to multiple readings. On one level it prepares the audience for an array of objects that have been denied functional purpose. On another it evokes a limitless catalogue of decline in late twentieth and early twenty-first century western craft and design: the demise of male DIY and making by hand; the shift in the crafts from items of everyday utility to autonomous art objects; the practice of displaying but never using functional studio ceramics. And so on towards darker, existential futilities beyond the cosy nooks of craft.

Having visited the gallery space while it was a building site, Slee began to map out his “landscapes,” setting a scene that would “bring ceramics out of the closet.” In fact he has been taking ceramics out of its rarefied hideaway for years, mixing the medium with ready-mades, and cutting ties with references to ceramic history and the functional vessel.
Landscapes

Slee noted that two of the three free-standing cases would be flanked by long windows which, located on one of the highest levels of the Museum, frame the perpetually changing London skyscape in all weathers. Prior to their refurbishment, the top floor Ceramics Galleries enjoyed – or more accurately endured – a close relationship with the weather, from rain dripping through leaky roofs into strategically placed buckets to stifling summer temperatures and the melodramatic sound of howling winds. As a regular visitor to the galleries before their closure and transformation, Slee was well aware of such effects. And so it is not surprising to find that, on one level, the site-specific works in these cases are about the peculiarly British subject of the weather, or respond in subtle ways to changing weather and light effects.

Rope Rain, positioned close to one window to capitalise on light and shade, comprises a vast black cloud of vertical ceramic rope strands – each twisted slightly differently – and numerous bright blue ceramic hemispheres whose shadows on a glass shelf create the illusion of raindrops. As he planned the scene, Slee was excited by the idea of people experiencing the changing slanting reflections on the shiny glazed rope as they walked by.

But Rope Rain is open to other interpretations beyond the matter of precipitation. As Slee claims, “A ceramic rope is totally futile … When fellow artist Carol McNicoll first saw one of my ropes [he has previously made white and blue versions] she said it was the most stupid thing she’d ever seen. I took that as a great compliment.” Read as a reference to suicide or execution by hanging, Slee’s ropes seem still darker. They become a visual metaphor for “storm clouds gathering,” or “being under a cloud” – the senselessness or futility of life. This is not the first time the artist has revealed a morbid curiosity about death at the end of a rope. In the recent exhibition The Secret Life of the Office he made a cartoon-like broken rope noose, while some years ago, when asked to nominate music and literature that had affected him, he selected A Handbook on Hanging by Charles Duff, describing it as “a brilliant satire on hanging and the best anti-corporal punishment book.”

The remaining free-standing cases contain Slee’s elaborate fantasies around tools of the trade. An admirer of Jim Dine’s tool drawings - “I'm very jealous of those, it’s a good, clean, workmanlike subject,” Slee sees tools as symbols of artistic creation. His fascination with DIY culture, and its relationship to masculinity, appears in earlier works such as Mechanic’s Snake (2001) – a cross between a phallic snake and a spanner; Sausage (2006) - a parody of male DIY that poignantly acknowledges recent findings that women had overtaken men in purchasing DIY goods; and Trowels (2007) - a myriad of once useful implements rendered useless by the addition of ornamental enamelling and silky fringing.

For Slee, browsing and buying DIY paraphernalia to incorporate into his work is an essential and absorbing activity:
I shop a lot. My breaks from the studio are shops. I get tuned into looking at things in builders’ merchants, DIY warehouses, anywhere that has bits in it. Pound shops with slogans: “Buy it today, it won’t be here tomorrow!” And it won’t be. One day I saw a corner full of buckets and the next day they had all gone...There’s a great hardware shop in Worthing - I went in and bought six hammer handles, a fly swat and a bottle of French polish and the bloke didn’t even blink an eyelid.

In Saws Slee has diagonally arranged ten saws at chest level. The blades point inwards, intersecting like a landscape of hills and valleys, as light from the nearby window pleasingly bounces off serrated metal. Store-bought blades - some unaltered since purchase, others sandblasted or chrome plated – are combined with his own ceramic handles secured by oversized screw heads. Handles glazed in black and brown are close to the originals, while more exuberant forms, colours and textures demonstrate the influence of flowing architectural features and the French curve. Jagged steel teeth and a “mock-croc” textured handle comically collide. Envisaging a cartoon image of all ten saws simultaneously cutting wood, Slee captures the sound in a visual one-liner at the bottom of the case: a buzzing insect hit by a plastic fly swat.

If the sound of ten saws at work is an ear-piercing buzz, then that of over a hundred hammers simultaneously banging away would be an ear-shattering thunderclap. Thunder was one of the ideas behind Hammers, as was the exquisite tension that arises from the placement of ceramic hammers on sheets of plate glass. Like his earlier ceramic anvils, Slee’s ceramic hammers are completely useless. He has made literally dozens of them - each one unique - for a “higgledy-piggledy display with no plan” on two shelves. His method of presentation is a wilful subversion of the taxonomical arrangements usually associated with museums.

Hunting out exactly the right type of hammer handle opened up a whole new world for Slee (who was initially surprised to find that replacement hammer handles even existed). Press-moulded, slab-built or made up of thrown composite forms, in all shapes and sizes, with luminous computer-like colours, Slee’s playful, sometimes rude hammer heads (the euphemistic use of the words “tool” and “hammer” has not been lost on him) range from the highly machined-looking to the softly natural, with the odd Ikea knob, textured rubber ferrule and colourful thimblette thrown in. A random survey of this DIY extravaganza might pick out pods, logs and miniature anvils; stout screws, inflatables and condoms; cartoon beaks, hairstyles and manual squeezings. In a spectacular display of colour and glaze, he takes the viewer on a visual rollercoaster from the sublimely saturated to the exquisitely nuanced. There is a hammer for every occasion, from serious Flintstone-style walloping to the most delicate operation. “My hammers look like they have a purpose,” says Slee, “but we don’t know what it is. I want the audience to use their imaginations.” They will.

Over in the wall cases, Slee continues his theme of useless implements, beginning with a family of brooms and brushes, each with its own specific name and purpose, be it a road sweeper’s broom or a banister brush. Slee is
fond of brooms. He noticed them everywhere in Korea a few years ago and thought they would make a good subject. More recently, he bought a batch of builders’ brooms and model shop items and devised a series of condensed narratives featuring miniature plastic figures set in bristly landscapes. “Sending unconscious messages,” Viral Brush (2008) - the most telling piece in the context of this essay – showed an axe-wielding man about to chop down a ceramic bush. For the V&A project, Slee has removed all the bristles from his found brooms and brushes, replacing them with forests of reflective, glazed ceramic rods. Placing them inside one of the wall cases, he is mindful of “the dreadful pun on broom cupboards.” He relishes the idea of ceramics on glass which, “like the thought of fingernails scraping a blackboard, will put people’s teeth on edge.”

Adjacent to Brooms leans the spectacularly useless and hilarious Pickaxe with its ceramic head of joke wood - taken from moulds of a hamster’s plastic toy log – and the equally redundant Spade, a ceramic facsimile of the real thing apart from its sunshine yellow lunar surface. Close by, Slee has composed Shovel, Rake, Dust, a little vignette – coincidentally made during the recent credit crunch - in which he rails against the hierarchy of ceramic materials.

What partly prompted it was the idea that brick clay has absolutely zilch value, it’s as common as muck. I was thinking about the way certain materials are hyped up, the boloney about porcelain’s mystique. Porcelain is really no more valuable than brick clay, yet it’s given added value. I’ve added value to the brick clay by sticking on cheap diamanté. So the work is about material worth, value, bling – brick clay bling – also consumerism and how value is perceived. And it’s futile, dust to dust...It’s also about making a tool useless by making it precious – when the Queen plants a tree she’s given a silver spade, it does nothing.

Slee’s train of thought can be traced back to a conversation he had a few years ago with designer and object-maker Hans Stofer. Speaking admiringly of the apparent worthlessness of a work by Stofer entitled Stuffed (a light bulb filled with human hair), Slee says:

Our values in craft have got a bit skewed. Making it out of silver or porcelain or gold and making it really intricate doesn’t make something valuable … as I see it, it’s the object itself that counts not the material.[5]

Also related to his thinking about material worth and prompted by the saying “As dumb as a bag of hammers,” Slee came up with Carrots, a sack of “ridiculous” vegetables made of “worthless” red clay, covered in an appropriate layer of rich orange terra sigillata slip and sprouting tufts of recycled nylon bristles. Finally, next to Carrots, comes Trophies, three rows of three dark pink botanical forms taken from the mould of a found plastic carpet beater and mounted on smart black Bakelite bases. Chancing on a red synthetic version of the traditional cane beater (still to be found displayed alongside old agricultural tools in English country pubs) in a hardware shop on a Greek island, he had responded to it immediately and bought it.

Who beats carpets these days? It’s a futile thing, completely out of date. When I came across it I really liked it and brought it back in a suitcase. It lay
around for ages while I thought about how I would translate it. Eventually I thickened it up, found a technical solution and it became something else. That happens quite a lot, finding something and having to work out how to use it, it’s a craftsman’s thing.

Trophies springs from domestic instances of objects put in cases, from his own grandfather’s sporting trophies to the ceramics people display in cabinets in their homes. This treatment of studio pots (which is partly because of their monetary value) is a particular bugbear: “It’s madness, completely futile!” Trophies also conjures up the British love affair with sport, competitions, puzzles and prizes. The installation is a brain-teaser, inviting viewers to identify identical pairs, nearly identical pairs and an odd-one-out. Never one to miss a pun, Slee smiles at the thought of people beating each other as they play his little game.

From Lagoon to Ocean?

Attempts to fit Slee’s Disneyesque ceramics with their immaculate finishes into a craft context have long been problematic, despite the fact that back in 1990 the artist stood firm by the definition of “craft potter.” But how serious was he? Was he calling our bluff? As John Houston wryly pointed out at the time:

Slee is also part of that internationalism which uses craft in much the same way as medieval scholars used Latin: to profitably roam colleges, arts centres and conferences where craft is shown and spoken.[6]

Reflecting on his preference for the “craft potter” label, Slee commented in 2008:

But you will realise that irony is part of my makeup … I have never been convinced of my craft, my relationship to it varies from love to hate, a healthy scepticism I believe, a conservatism? I do believe in change, innovation, challenging “the rules.” This is a continued reaction to my first encounter in the 1960s with pottery when it was in part a world entrenched in inflexible standards. I have learnt there is nobody more bigoted that the Pottery fundamentalist. But I believe we are in an age where there are no manifestos, all we are left with are mission statements. Are we now the new fundamentalists?[7]

Slee’s ambivalence towards craft runs deep. He talks of having “a craftsman’s mentality to the point of obsession,” and cannot deny the enjoyment he derives from his low-tech making, nor the satisfaction he gains from having to invent new ways of doing things. “There’s no book to tell you how to make and fire a ceramic bristle,” he says in his deadpan manner. But in parallel with these feelings is his growing frustration with the inwardness, esoteric language and conventions of craft, the live demonstration being a particular source of irritation. Frankly he would rather watch Painter (1995), Paul McCarthy’s hilarious parody of the painting demonstration that undermines the idea of the heroic male artist. Slee perceives craft in the twenty-first century as “occupying a comfort zone,” a view not dissimilar from that of Grayson Perry:
I see the craft world as a kind of lagoon and the art world in general as the ocean. Some artists shelter in this lagoon, because their imagination isn’t robust enough to go out into the wider sea …[8]

A further difficulty of fitting Slee’s ceramics into the context of studio ceramics arises from his increasing assimilation of the language and values of fine art, prompting Garth Clark, in his significant critical appraisal of the artist in 2003, to describe him as “the craft world’s resident alien” and “a full-bodied Pop artist.”[9] Identifying similarities in their work - subject matter, love of Baroque excess, play with ceramic history - Clark rightly allies Slee with Neo-Pop artist Jeff Koons (b.1955), observing that Slee “enjoys the transgressive edge and icy detachment of Jeff Koons’s art and his readiness to wade into the verboten zones of sentimentality, cuteness and even pornography.” While many curators with responsibility for craft collections are more than willing to capture Slee’s work as evidence of contemporary interdisciplinary practice, others may be more resistant.[10] For instance, Slee has in his possession a letter from a major European Museum “explaining why they wouldn’t buy a piece of my work. They said I didn’t fit into a continuum of British studio ceramics. They couldn’t see a connection, which in a way was a backhanded compliment!”[11]

If Koons is one of Slee’s fellow travellers, then certain exponents of the “new British sculpture” such as Tony Cragg (b.1949), Bill Woodrow (b.1948) and Richard Deacon (b.1949) are among his other allies.[12] Transgressing Modernist high seriousness in the 1970s and 1980s, in true Duchampian spirit they appropriated readymade materials and objects to produce narratively or socially charged conceptual art. Slee’s use of readymades began naturally enough when his daughter handed over her discarded ornaments and he began to stick them on his ceramics in the mid-1990s. With the major exception of the mixed media collages of Gillian Lowndes (b.1936), the use of found objects in twentieth century British studio ceramics was virtually non-existent prior to Slee’s plunderings. By 2001 he had become uneasy with the sentimentalism of his ceramics and banished his daughter’s trinkets and other factory-made knick-knacks from his work for good, piling the last of them into The Wheelbarrow of the Medusa (2001). Poised to explore new themes, he began appropriating more pristine readymades – bamboo, brooms and metal-plated tubing – to expand the narrative, humour and tensile possibilities of his work.

I want to avoid the second-hand, junk readymade. I use new and shiny components, the manufactured things that carry no romanticism. It’s also a commentary on modern consumerism. I wanted to move away from hyping up the romanticism in my work, and from objects associated with memory and loss. Life’s too short!

When Slee has decided that an idea has run its course, that he is in danger of becoming “a kind of hack, churning out the same objects forever,” he makes what he terms as “full stop pieces.” Recognising he had no more to say on the subject of the vessel in ceramic history, he made Plough (2004), his final work that references the vessel. (By the same token, The Wheelbarrow of the Medusa was a “full stop piece,” the last work in which he used second-hand ornaments). Having questioned his material specialisation and the self-
referential nature of studio ceramics and consciously given up references to the ceramic vessel, he began to expand the vision and ambition in his work. Over the past six years, Slee has relished his new-found freedom to explore new materials, processes, subject matter and practices, summoning up an ever-changing parade of provocative objects, from button mushrooms standing to attention in a frying pan to giant balls of dust scuttling across the floor to a small nuclear explosion in the living room. During this period he has executed the most radical manoeuvres in his career to date, with excursions into enamelling, performance and site-specific installation.

In a move that signalled his arrival at a kind of crossroads, Slee took on performance during the 2005 World Ceramic Biennale in Korea, later quoting from RoseLee Goldberg as a “very grand” way of explaining his actions:

... whenever a certain school, be it Cubism, Minimalism or conceptual art, seemed to have reached an impasse, artists have returned to performance as a way of breaking down categories and indicating new directions.[13]

Prompted by an Asian nickname for Westerners, “big noses,” Slee set to work on making a gigantic clay nose that fitted over his head. Dressed from head to toe in white and wearing the giant object, he lay outstretched on a couple of trestle tables for short periods, during which curious onlookers would tap the nose and stroke him. Slee appeared in performance mode again in 2007, this time in dark attire, sporting a large green ceramic nose and holding a bucket of multi-coloured noses. [14]

In the same year, Slee presented various enigmatic works, “brilliantly spotlit to look sinister” in the group ceramics exhibition END. There was a wall of ceramic gas flames, found buckets containing a layer of cracked ceramic ice floating on water, and a dark blue ceramic rope hanging ominously beside a barbell and lobster.[15] This work finds a natural affinity with the constructions of Richard Wentworth (b.1947), who also uses found manufactured objects, transforming them in unsettling ways with a spareness and neatness of execution. There is also a strong correlation between Slee’s witty observations of the overlooked in everyday life – the ceramic blob of bubblegum stuck on a pane of glass, a ceramic (cheese-like) wedge on the gallery floor - and Wentworth’s project Making Do and Getting By, an ongoing series of photographs that document small acts of human intervention into the environment: a glove on a railing spike, a cigarette packet under a wonky table leg.

Slee’s art has not gone unnoticed by fine art curators. Since 2003 he has been invited to show alongside painters, photographers, sculptors and cartoonists, kicking off with Good Bad Taste (2003) and Strange Relationship (2004) at the Keith Talent Gallery, followed by Voodoo Shit (2005) at the Hales Gallery, East London. [16] For this show, based on the Western idea of voodoo as presented in James Bond movies, Slee’s mind turned to spears, resulting in Dick Heads (2004), three enormous ceramic condom heads on poles. For Cult Fiction (2007), an ambitious project that explored “the reciprocal relationship between comics and art,” Slee presented a pistol,
ceramic meat hook, brooms and a bunny’s necklace that could be viewed as frozen moments in an ongoing comic book narrative.[17]

As he has moved ever further away from “the mainstream ceramic community,” Slee has often asked himself what he was taking with him. He has arrived at two conclusions. Firstly, domesticity: “I’m still interested in the power of my art being in the home and of a human scale, democratic and egalitarian in nature.” Secondly, skills: “I have a craftsman’s make-up to the point of inflexibility.”[18] As evidenced by his uncompromising approach to Cold Frames (2000), his first large-scale outdoor sculpture, commissioned for Sculpture at Goodwood, Sussex, he would much rather spend months making a work independently than work in collaboration with a team of fabricators.

As he navigates his journey towards the world of contemporary fine art, Slee is on course to make a clean break from craft’s comfort zone, while remaining committed to craft processes and the domestic landscape.[19] Slee puts it bluntly: “I have not changed.” But the focus of his ambition and desire - where he wants to be and how he wants to position his art - certainly has. Critics and curators on both sides of the permeable divide between craft and fine art will no doubt debate his identity ad nauseam, all wishing to claim him as their own. Is he a ceramist who expands the language of ceramics, or a sculptor for whom ceramics plays a significant role? Slee will surely revel in the futility of such persistent attempts to redefine him.

Notes
Unless otherwise stated, quotations from Richard Slee are taken from conversations between the artist and the author, 2007-09.

1. As described on various occasions by Dr Oliver Watson, former Curator of Applied Arts at the Victoria & Albert Museum, now Director of the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar. See Oliver Watson, “Richard Slee, Grand Wizard of Studio Ceramics,” exhibition leaflet, Barrett Marsden Gallery, 1998.

2. Over recent decades Slee’s numerous works in the V&A’s permanent collections have been on regular exhibition at the Museum, while his pieces were often included in temporary displays organised by the former Crafts Council Shop at the Victoria & Albert Museum (1974-1999).

3. Timm Ulrichs used a vitrine to exhibit himself in 1961; thirty years on, guest curator Peter Greenaway interspersed historic paintings with vitrines containing live nude models in The Physical Self at the Museum Beuymans van-Beuningen, Rotterdam; in 1995 Cornelia Parker and Tilda Swinton collaborated on The Maybe, a performance/installation in which Swinton lay ‘asleep’ in a vitrine at the Serpentine Gallery, London.


10. The V&A has purchased various works incorporating readymades by Richard Slee, including *Sausage* (C.75:1 to 5-2007) and *Spade* (C.102-2007).


15. *END* was staged at The Danish Museum of Art & Design, Copenhagen, Denmark and travelled to Bomuldsfabriken Kunsthall, Arendal, Norway in 2007. Fellow exhibitors included Karen Bennicke, Martin Bodilsen Kaldahl, Alison Britton, Peder Rasmussen, Martin Smith and Marit Tingleff.

16. Fellow exhibitors in *Good Bad Taste* included James Aldridge, Peter McDonald and Christian Ward; those in *Strange Relationship* included David Humphrey and Medrie MacPhee. Fellow exhibitors in *Voodoo Shit* included Trevor Appleson, Hans op de Beeck, Katherine Bernhardt,

17. *Cult Fiction*, a Hayward Touring exhibition was originated by artist and curator Kim L Pace, and was co-curated with Hayward curator Emma Mahoney in 2007. Fellow exhibitors included Adam Dant, Glen Baxter, David Shrigley, Robert Crumb and Posy Simmonds, amongst many others.


19. Slee’s act of distancing himself from craft’s comfort zone may be compared with the flight from the crafts by notable practitioners in the USA, such as Ken Price (b. 1935) and Ron Nagle (b. 1939). Price exerted a strong early influence on Slee. For an important analysis of the current situation in the USA, see Garth Clark, “The Death of Craft, A Post-Modern Post-Mortem,” Crafts 216 (Jan/Feb 2009), pp48-51. This is an excerpt from Clark's lecture “How Envy Killed the Crafts Movement: An Autopsy in Two Parts,” presented by the Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, Oregon, Oregon College of Arts and Craft, and Pacific Northwest College of Art on 16 October, 2008.

**Brief chronology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Born Carlisle, Cumbria, England</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>Carlisle College of Art and Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965-70</td>
<td>Central School of Art and Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Own studio, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Visiting Lecturer, Central Saint Martin’s College of Art and Design and Brighton Polytechnic, and Senior Lecturer, Harrow School of Art</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Own studio, Brighton</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986-88</td>
<td>Royal College of Art, London (MA Design RCA, Degree by Project)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, then Principal Lecturer, Camberwell College of Arts, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992-</td>
<td>Professor of the University of the Arts London</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Represented by Hales Gallery, London</td>
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Selected exhibitions since 2000

2002  *The Uncanny Room* Pitshanger Manor, Ealing and The Bowes Museum, County Durham (catalogue)
2003  *Legacy of Modern Ceramic Art: Ceramic Art from an International Perspective* Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan (catalogue)
2003  *Panorama* Tate St. Ives and Ruthin Craft Centre, Wales (catalogue)
2003  *Hypercrafting* Monash University, Melbourne, Australia (catalogue)
2003  *Good Bad Taste* Keith Talent Gallery, London
2003  *Crafts Now – 21 Artists from America, Europe and Asia* Kanazawa, Japan (catalogue)
2003  *Show5: Richard Slee Retrospective* The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent and UK tour (monograph)
2004  *A Secret History of Clay* Tate Liverpool (catalogue)
2004  *Panoramas* The Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney, Scotland (solo)
2004  *Strange Relationship* Keith Talent Gallery, London
2005  *Trans-Ceramic Art* World Ceramic Centre, Icheon, Korea (catalogue)
2007  *Richard Slee* Garth Clark Gallery, New York, USA (solo)
2007  *Cult Fiction* Hayward Touring exhibition (catalogue)
2007  *Making and Meaning* Object Gallery, Sydney, Australia (catalogue)
2007  *END* Danish Museum of Art and Design, Copenhagen, Denmark; Bomuldsfabrikken Kunsthall, Arundal, Norway (catalogue)

Selected public collections

British Council, London
Crafts Council, London
Los Angeles County Museum, USA
Museum of Arts and Design, New York, USA
Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan
National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, USA
Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Japan
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Victoria & Albert Museum, London