

TACTILE TABLEWARE

Considered craftsmanship and painstaking attention to detail are at the very core of Chloe Dowds' award-winning hand thrown Irish porcelain



How long you've been designing and making? I studied art, design and ceramics for nine years but my passion for design goes back much further than this. My grandparents, Jeremiah Hoad, a landscape painter, and Judith Hoad, a craftsperson, had a huge influence on my early interest in the visual world. My grandfather had a studio in a very rural part of Donegal and I have fond memories of visiting his studio. I remember the smell of the oil paints and white spirits, stacks of paintings lined up against the walls and canvases on easels around the studio. It always felt very peaceful in there. I really enjoyed the paintings but I was more intrigued by the process. I loved seeing the rainbow colours of paint he'd mixed on his glass-top table, pots of brushes all different sizes and metal tubes of paint half used. It felt like a mysterious place.

In 2008 I completed a BA (Hons) in Fine Art Ceramics, Galway, followed by a Higher Diploma in Art Teaching at Limerick School of Art and Design in 2009. I then went on to complete my MA in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Limerick and went on to do the DCCoI (Design and Crafts Council of Ireland) pottery skills course in 2012. As soon as I finished the course, in 2014, I knew I wanted to set up my own pottery as soon as possible. For me, it's difficult to be away from clay for too long as it's something I really miss. I set up my pottery in November 2014 and am loving every minute!

How has your work evolved over this time? I feel my work has become more feminine and I throw my pieces much more thinly, which gives them a really light and delicate feel, similar to classic bone china mugs. I make the rims of my mugs thin as I feel this is much more pleasurable to drink from. I've also developed a range of five different coloured glazes, which I mix in the studio to my own recipes. The colours are clean and contemporary yet maintain a sense of their original inspiration, which comes from nature.

Image Roland Paschhoff



Where is your studio? The studio is in County Wicklow; it's a great place to work, as the building has been designed for artists. There are roughly nine artists working at the studios including painters, sculptors and felt-makers. It's a peaceful place and suits my working habits very well. I use Instagram to give people a sense of the making process, so I have many working shots taken at the studio on my Instagram profile. For more insight into the process, take a look at: www.instagram.com/chloedowdsceramics

What would you describe as your signature look? My work is incredibly tactile. It's designed for people to use.

My pieces want to be touched and held. They offer a comfort to the user. Every element of the design has been considered to heighten the user's experience of the piece. From the thin drinking rim and soft curves, which fit the fingers perfectly, to the polished, smooth base, these pieces are made to be functional as well as beautiful. The polished base has certainly become part of my signature style.

What are your main design influences? I have a passion for good craftsmanship and attention to detail. I adore well-considered design and have been inspired by the work of Lucie Rie and Hans Coper over the years. Sometimes simple things can be incredibly beautiful to me. Simplicity and sensitivity to form and design are very important to me as a maker. Like all artists, I'm a bit of a magpie and draw inspiration from many different and sometimes surprising sources. As well as enjoying form in its physical sense, I'm also inspired greatly by music. The soft spiral I make in my pieces came originally from

trying to emulate the vibrations of music.

What's in the pipeline for Chloe Dowds Ceramics? I'm currently working on prototypes for some new products I'm adding to my range. I've recently added pitchers to my range, which are very elegant and come in two different sizes. Also, next year I'm planning to do an artist's residency in Berlin where I can spend time developing some new work I've been planning.

Where can we buy your products? My work is available on my website at chloedowds.com but can also be purchased from Daisie Stone, Dalkey; Kilkenny Design Centre, Kilkenny; Bunnratty Castle, Limerick; Queen's University, Belfast; Caffrey's Gallery, Ballina; The White Door, Sutton; The Leitrim Design House, Carrick-on-Shannon and So-Collective, Kildare Village. You'll also find me at the RDS National Craft Fair in December! chloedowds.com

