

Review of our Wednesday Morning Talk, 17th October

Sally Larke, Potter.

It was with great pleasure that we welcomed Sally Larke as our speaker to follow the AGM today. Sally has been working at the Art Gallery as Learning and Engagement Officer for several months, now, and has really made us feel welcome as artists.

Sally was the middle child of two teachers, born in the 1970's and brought up in Cheddar, Somerset, in beautiful surroundings. She feels she was fortunate at that time, in that art, including use of clay, was an integral part of her state education.

She later did a B.Ed. degree at Warwick and specialised in art, later becoming a primary school teacher in Stratford. Childhood holidays were always in Cornwall and she has fond memories of investigating rock pools and collecting shells. These early experiences were apparent in the work laid out on the tables in front of her.



Sally Larke



Sally's talk attracted a record turnout

Motherhood, she has three children, house moves and the pressures of being a teacher all lead to breaks in her development as a potter, but sometimes something is just meant to be. Having gone to view a potential new house on Emscote Road, Warwick and almost refusing to look at it, due to the busy main road location, she discovered that the coach house was all set up as a ceramics studio! It was the home of Bob Flexton, then head of ceramics at the Warwickshire

College AND he was retiring from pottery and would give her all the equipment and stock! This was the start of her return to ceramics.

Sally has definite views about pottery. It must not be held too dearly, so much goes wrong there is no point in getting hung up about breakages and accidents. If something cracks, use it, learn to cope with failure, appreciate what you have.

Around 2009/10 she went to Coventry University to do an MA in contemporary craft and was able to develop many ideas. She regards the making of vessels as something fundamental to pottery and to being human. Much of the work she had on display uses cylindrical vessels, repeated (like the childhood shell collections) in all sizes, with differently finished interiors, often incorporating glass. These vessels are arranged on shelves, in floor standing groups, which the public are invited to rearrange, and displayed horizontally to show their interiors, in wall hung frames. Edmund de Waal is clearly an influence.

Sally Larke talk continued...



It's not only carefully chosen collections that interest Sally. She talked about groupings of objects, such as those found on an ordinary mantelpiece, a carefully chosen vase, with a letter from the doctors propped up behind it. During her MA, she printed ordinary items onto ceramic to use them as part of grouped arrangements.

Decoration is also something that Sally feels is of importance. She emphasised the uncertainties of glazing, applying dull grey and brown liquids and getting beautiful blues following firing, but that, get it wrong, and the work will crack or drip. She made comparisons with cookery, it's not just formal learning, but getting the feel for materials,

constantly learning, progressing, but never actually arriving.

Sally then finished this excellent and carefully structured talk by saying that the role of the potter was to turn earth into jewels, Sally certainly manages to do this.

Katharine Barker

