

Artist's statement

'I gather, collate, re-use, layer, peel, burn, reveal, locate, question, duplicate, play and photograph'

Kate MccGwire's work asks questions about the very nature of beauty. She's intrigued by the possibility of envisaging beauty as something more complex than merely what delights the senses: beauty can be about a problem; it can be something that repels you or makes you question the status quo. The idea that it is a cultural phenomenon, susceptible to argument through the creative process, fascinates her.

Much of Kate's work references Freud's 'Unheimliche' (the uncanny, or, literally, the 'unhomely'); the idea, to quote Freud, of 'a place where the familiar can somehow excite fear'. It also embraces artistic notions of the Abject.

She will take an everyday thing or idea that is intrinsically discomfiting and, by re-framing it, entice the viewer into re-examining his preconceptions and prejudices – cultural, historical, personal – about the everyday. The viewer's response is visceral, the impact immediate, the ideas triggered resonating in their mind somewhere beyond rational interpretation.

Organic patterns, forms and materials have an instinctive draw; work may look determinedly abstract to the naked eye, but by using a spiral or circle, or a familiar material, the viewer's gaze is lured inward, as if into a 'field of attraction', only to be repulsed or even menaced by the associations that unfold once 'inside'. At the same time the scale and delicacy of the work reinforce the potential for awe and beauty in the unconventional.

Intrinsic to her method is the collecting and sorting of materials from hundreds of different sources over a period of months, even years. In turn, pieces evolve intuitively as if out of the subconscious, the language evocative rather than purely illustrative. As the work takes shape, a new, playful reality emerges, so that the object itself becomes a sort of prism, refracting the layers of meaning and cultural associations buried within, the quantity of materials used sometimes deliberately overwhelming, as if charged with a power and ambition beyond the reach they possess when seen in isolation.