

Review of The Ceramic House 2013 exhibition

Robert Dawson

The Ceramic House is an intriguing place and I enjoyed my visit there. When we arrived, we went first into the front living room as I could see through the doorway that drinks were being served in there. This room had a retro feel with low lighting, a lit-up bar, and colourful works of ceramic art on the walls, shelves, everywhere. A 33 and a third record was turning on a deck playing cool jazz and the whole room tended to conjure up some distant memory of being somewhere in Latin America many years ago. A friendly crowd of quite elegantly dressed people were milling about and chatting with one another.

Third drink in hand, we proceeded to explore the rest of the house. There were many rooms, on about three floors. In a lot of these, and along the corridors and narrow stairways, ceramic art was exhibited all over the place, one of the most evocative pieces being a set of four old-fashioned-looking porcelain corsets and one single porcelain waistcoat lying, as though cast off, on a double bed in an attic room. These creamy white unglazed porcelain corsets and waistcoat managed to somehow be erotic and uncanny at the same time. They provoked lively conversation amongst the small group of us and other guests who had climbed to this room at the top of the house.

Proceeding back downstairs, we went to wander in the garden. The garden is unusual as it is on a very steep slope with three levels: two terraces overlooking the lowest ground level. Wood fires were burning on the two terraces. There was more colourful ceramic art in the garden, and, in a small building at the back of the garden, yet more ceramics. At the very lowest level of the garden, there was an entrance to a dark and spooky low-ceilinged cellar. Some of the guests recoiled and wouldn't go in, perhaps afraid of spiders or ghosts, but it was their loss. For those of us who dared to venture in, we found pod-like ceramic lanterns hanging from the ceiling and walls. Light was coming from little glass portholes in the pods which aroused curiosity so that one was compelled to peer inside. Inside were surreal landscapes in which tiny people appeared to be going about their tormented lives. Words can't describe this splendour in the basement. You gotta see it.