Exhibiting potter likes to do things on a large scale

THE Crafts Study Centre and the James Hockey Gallery in Farnham are hosting a larger than life exhibition by the ceramic artist and potter Sandy Brown until Saturday, August 16. Admission is free.

Sandy Brown received £26,000 from Art Council England South West, the largest amount ever awarded to an individual craftsperson, to produce this exhibition. The undertaking was ambitious, both creatively and technically, and is one of the most impressive exhibitions of ceramic sculpture this country has seen.

The installation is in two parts, The Still Point and The Dance. The former will be held at the Crafts Study Centre who were recently awarded a £185,000 grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund under the Collecting Cultures Scheme. The Still Point is a contemporary tea ceremony based on the Japanese tea ceremony, and is a form of meditation. Sandy Brown created a tea ceremony room, designed and made all the utensils and performs the ritual as a meditation.

Sandy Brown (FD28-111-08)

The second installation, The Dance, will be held at the James Hockey Gallery. It contrasts with The Still Point's meditation and calm in its heightened energy and exuberance. The large-scale ceramic sculptures are up to two metres tall, abstract and colourful, with sculptures representing the female, male, fertility and fecundity and of The Dance. The installation also includes large paintings that sing with movement and colour.

Sandy Brown comments on her work: "Since moving into my new large studio four years ago my work has expanded literally and creatively. I have become more ambitious both in scale and in content, and I have built a much bigger kiln capable of firing large pieces.

"This grant enabled me to develop work which has been gestating for a few years; a statement about life, energy and about being female in the 21st century. Also, the opportunity to show how passionate I am about the ritual usage of ceramics is highly important; we need rituals in our culture, and this is a way of bringing art into our daily lives."

Sandy Brown became a potter when living in Japan for five years. Since returning to England over 30 years ago she has been influential in livening up the ceramics world. She has been cited as a major influence on European ceramics and has work in major public collections such as V&A, Crafts Council, and many others here and in Europe, USA and Australia. For more information on her work visit: www.sandybrownarts.com.

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Gazing at a still point in space

AT the Craft Study Centre and the Hockey Gallery there are currently two linked ceramic shows: *Ritual: The Still Point* at the Craft Study Centre (1st Floor) and *Dance* in the Hockey Gallery. Here is a range of extraordinary and unusual work, bold, exuberant, joyful and highly colourful by Sandy Brown, a ceramist with an individual talent.

Sandy trained for some time in the 1970s in Mashiko, Japan, and the visual culture there has inspired her work. Now, however, she has increased the scale and assertiveness of her creations such that some might be seen as sculptural. Her studio is in Appledore, Devon, and this show was first devised two years ago for the Appledore Visual Arts Festival and has been funded to travel in the UK and abroad by SW Arts.

The concept here is one of contrast – between a quiet, reflective environment for taking tea, as in Japan, and a hall where there is space for releasing energy, as in a dance.

The Still Point is a Japanese-style tea ceremony room, a square-framed box about 10 square metres surrounded by gauze, inside which is a wooden table and two benches with pieces of woven fabric made by Sandy and her teabowls, a large teapot and a kettle cast in metal. . The rest of the gallery is bare except has many examples of her large colourful pottery pieces.

In the Hockey Gallery, *Dance* is a spaciously populated area where her large pieces are as if set in a strange fairy-like woodland. There are also some large abstract acrylic paintings on the walls which reflect the design shapes and colours she uses for her ceramic glazes.

The four metre tall imposing 'double act' of *Prelude* [3] is a wildly curved and a single column of multiple large ceramic 'donut' rings, all in varied colour patterns in yellows, greens, blues and pinks which symbolise excitement. *Completely after the beginning* [12] is one of several phallic pieces about two metre high made in fired clay with white slip and coloured glazes. These are like highly decorated tree trunks with mushroom-like tops, which are supposedly represent fertile interaction. Also of interest are *Dancers* [8], two twisting two metre columns with lines and small circles as part of the decoration, and *Pod* [10] a vertical, less exotic, hand moulded block of brown fired clay with a long line of embedded "pebbles" in white. She has some 3D sketches for this piece on a shelf.

Her paintings are strong especially *Fertile Void* [20] with its swirling rings of yellow ochre on a vivid blue background, *Five Circles* [21] with freely painted rings in red, blue and yellow also on a blue background, and *Just Before the Beginning* [19] a whole melee of dots, rings and triangles.

A most interesting exhibition, well worth a visit. You may possibly think that the tea ceremony booth might have been appreciated more, as a contrast, if located at either end of the Hockey Gallery. It continues until August 16. Call 01252 891450 or visit www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk

Eric Buesnel

Sandy Brown with one of her works (FD28-113-08)