

Martha Cashman
Shanakiel, 2007
Porcelain, birchwood



For this and the coming months of the new academic year Campus Art will explore the work of emerging artists, introducing readers to recent recipients of the UCC Purchase Prize, awarded at the annual degree show at the Crawford College of Art and Design. The Campus Art features will be based on interviews with the artists, a process which will also benefit the UCC Art Collection Archives.

Martha Cashman, a graduate of the CCAD sculpture department, was one of the two recipients of this year's Purchase Prize. With titles such as 'Shanakiel', where the artist was raised, 'Sisters' and 'Brothers', the body of work exhibited in the CCAD exhibition is steeped in a history of memory, place and family. While the work on one level very noticeably refers to the artist's rural upbringing and her family market gardening background, works such as Shanakiel exude a strength and timeless quality that also nostalgically evoke another era.

Cashman's use of porcelain in its pure unglazed form, juxtaposed with contrasting media such as carved ash or birch wood, or dark twisted metal wire, recall the work of Marie Foley (born in Cork in 1959), who is represented in the UCC Art Collection by a work made of porcelain and slate. Foley is also a graduate of the sculpture department of the Crawford, and was included in the exhibition *Passing Through* displaying work of former Crawford students in the Glucksman in 2005.

The installation of Cashman's ceramics in the Crawford show, hung from sturdy horseshoe nails on the walls in small groupings of twos and threes, immediately brought to my mind the painter William Scott (1913-89), who adorned the walls of his studio with domestic kitchen utensils. Scott selected what he considered to be meaningless objects, pots, pans, forks and knives, so that he could focus his attention on the line and shape of the objects. While the self-assured simplicity of Cashman's design emphasises the intrinsic beauty of the materials and their form, it is more so their inherent personal symbolism that preoccupies the artist. Through her most recent body of work, Cashman pays homage to her elders, to lost traditions and to the community spirit of her rural Cork home place, imbuing each object she creates with a distinctive character of its own.

Text written by Nora Hickey following an interview with the artist.

Nora Hickey
Curator of Education + Collections
Lewis Glucksman Gallery