

Christopher McHugh

*The Setomonogatari Series*

Christopher McHugh's interest in Seto, a ceramics manufacturing centre near Nagoya in Japan, began in 2015, when he was ceramic artist-in-residence as part of the city's International Ceramics and Glass Art Exchange Programme. Although pottery has been produced in Seto since at least the thirteenth century, it is perhaps the post-war novelty figurine industry for which it is best known. While vestiges of this business remain, Seto faces similar socio-economic challenges to other centres of ceramic production, including Stoke-on-Trent.

Setomonogatari, the title of this series of work, is a portmanteau word formed from two Japanese words - setomono, the historical term for pottery made in Seto, and monogatari, meaning story. Adopting art-archaeological approaches, this work aims to raise awareness of the recent past of ceramics production at this site, a significant heritage resource which is perhaps too close to living memory to be perceived as being worthy of historical or archaeological attention. The work attempts to evoke a layering of time and material through a process of collage and reassembly. Abandoned plaster moulds have been reanimated through reuse, while discarded ceramic objects have been repurposed and integrated into the works. Photographic imagery, applied as digital ceramic decals, records the site's changing materiality through time.

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