



**The
National
Centre
for
Craft
& Design**

Alexis Rago: Chaos Contained

The National Centre for Craft & Design is a unique and ambitious gallery that seeks to exhibit the most innovative, challenging and accomplished artists practising within the craft and design arena today.



Image: Installation view by Alexis Rago.

Exhibition Overview

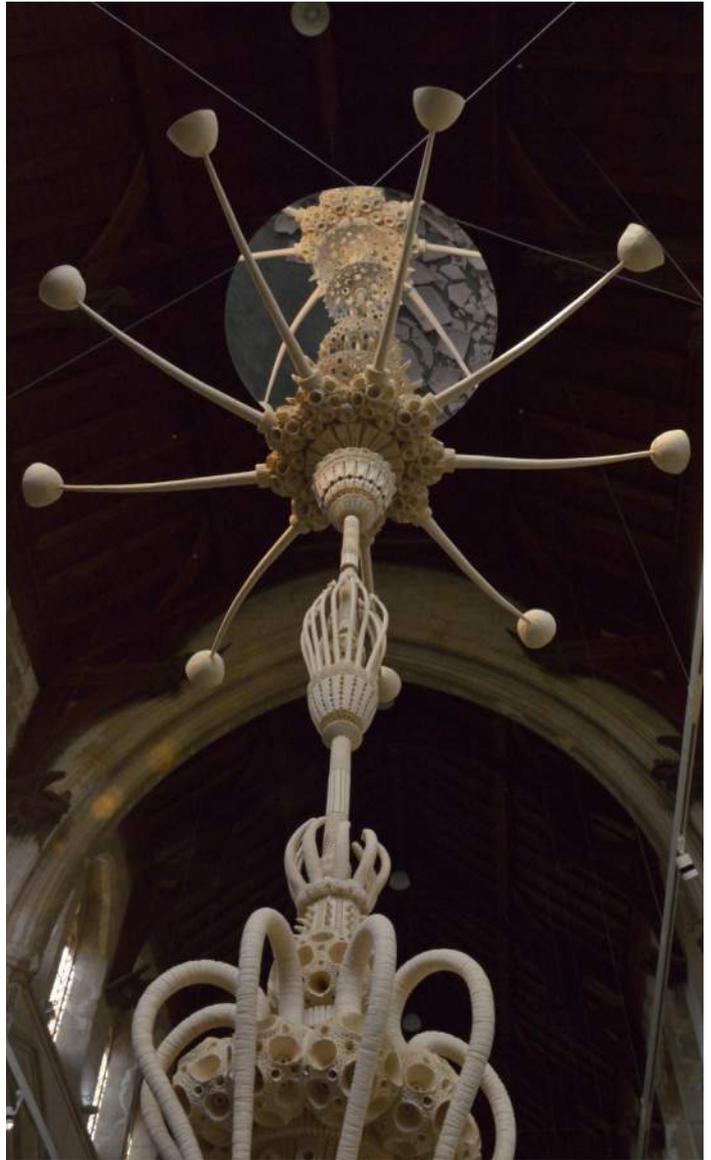
Alexis Rago: Chaos Contained is a solo exhibition of recent sculptural works, including small and large scale ceramic installations, film and photographs by artist Alexis Rago, exploring the inherent qualities of the material. Rago references ideas from life science, evolution, anthropology and sacred art with innovative integration of digital media, something recently developed into his practice; forming a key part of this exhibition.

Current Artistic Practice

Extending the boundaries of the handmade to express abstract ideas, Rago confronts the collision between art and science from a perspective that eschews technological apparatus in favour of directing energies into using a primal material at the extremes of its capabilities i.e. clay. Abstracting biological concepts of form and function is a negotiation between the engineered and the organic. The aesthetic objects emerging can be seen as organisational devices for the disruption and reconciliation of notions concerning the sacred and secular. The primary approach is atomic; the accretion of simple units to build complex partially self-organised structures.

Rago explains that his role, as the maker/artist, is to set initial parameters which are subsequently altered during the working process. Rago thinks of clay as a fluid stone which is transformed after firing into a fossil of its plastic self. Symmetry plays an important part as an underlying principle. He works with the tension between durability and fragility at the extremes of what is possible and practical while using video, sound and light to extend the spectrum of engagement with the forms.

Rago's intention in introducing such a high degree of intricacy and surface texture is to draw the observer into imaginative examination. The sculptures already have their history as objects of wonder, fascination and contemplation suggesting amongst other things, fantastic artificial fossils, ivory carvings and ritualistic objects. They are an explicit invitation to speculate on intent and purpose beyond the sculptures themselves.



Images: Installation views by Alexis Rago.

A New Direction

Until recently, Rago has worked in clay as a sculptural medium, using sound and video as independent extensions to the ideas referenced by the work. Having piloted on an experimental scale, he now incorporates sound within vase-like structures in this current work. This includes successfully creating and exhibiting/performing video and sound works elaborated during a residency at Nottingham Trent University.

Sound emissions are now regularly incorporated into the sculptural objects, the focus of this exhibition, opening out a new fertile ground both technically and conceptually - a merging of the crafting of form with the crafting of digital sound.

The exhibition has been a platform for the creation of innovative large scale ceramic works, each exploring an aspect of integration with other media:

- digital sound incorporated within the body of the sculptures interacting with audiences in a mediation between hard material and ephemeral acoustic form inhabiting the same space
- altering the surface ceramic landscape with video projections in a manipulation of visual and conceptual perceptions
- affecting the sense of space and form using chromatic light and reflective surfaces.

In a consideration of how humans, throughout history, have made images and objects to help grasp big ideas, the gallery becomes a dynamic spatial context for the genesis of new ceramic work referencing themes connecting biology, evolution, anthropology, and sacred art. The works in this exhibition:

- show clay being used to do extraordinary things
- explore the interaction between the material and the non-corporeal
- negotiate the current debate between biological sciences and religion in the context of evolution and sacred art.

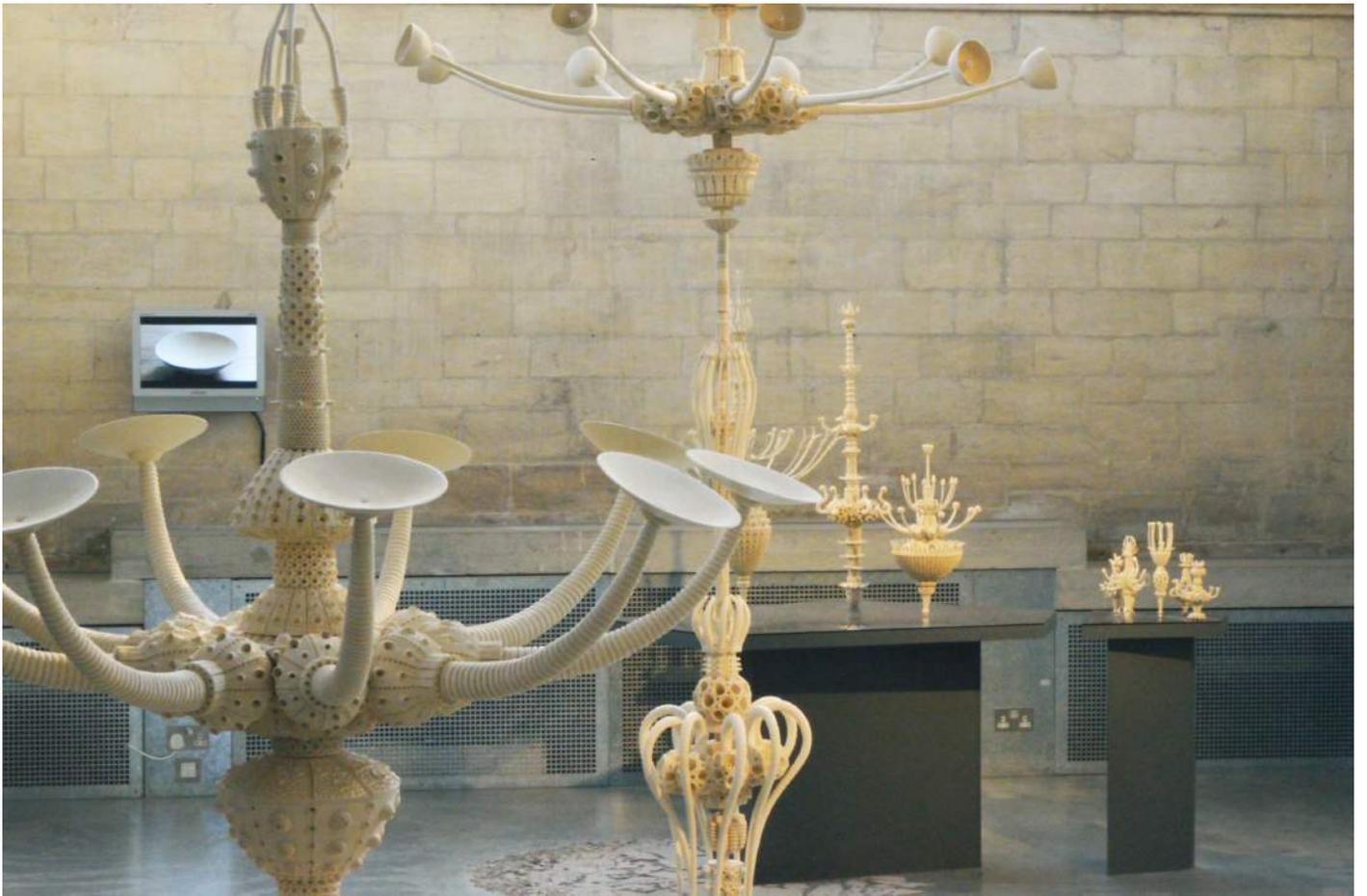
An extension of the show which is available for touring is an interactive activity for the audience to participate and respond to Rago's work, contributing small but significant visual illustrations of how ideas have been inspired by the artwork. An area for making can be offered alongside the exhibition, set with a collage of images and open wall-mounted display units all offering facilities for the participants to make and display their small, hand-made objects in.

Alexis Rago has recently collaborated with both the international antiquarian Hansord and the Linnean Society of London (the oldest natural history society in the world), and these projects opened the opportunity to bring historical/contextual material into the exhibition. Sources and inspirations for his work include early scientific instruments, collectors' cabinets, scientific and religious publications.

Also see Rago's website: <http://www.alexisrago.com/>



Image: Installation views by Alexis Rago.



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Image by Alexis Rago.

Exhibition Details

Who is it suitable for?

This exhibition is suitable for all age ranges and holds many subjects in the field of art informed by science. It is suitable for any venue and lends itself to educational and participative programming.

Size:

The exhibition is suitable for a space of 50-100 square metres, and may also be adapted to a smaller single installation. NCCD and the artist are also willing to explore site-specific installations.

Availability:

From January 2015 onwards.

Exhibition Content:

- Artworks by the artist Alexis Rago: series of ceramic pieces and selected pieces from studio, 1 film piece (Ex Machina) and 2 projections.
- Documentary film of Alexis Rago's studio space
- Interpretation & signage.

NCCD will provide:

- All artworks
- Installation guide and condition check file
- Guidance/support by NCCD staff during planning and installation
- Inwards transportation of exhibition
- All exhibition interpretation
- Full marketing pack
- Learning document to develop participative programme.

The host venue will provide:

- Professional installation and de-installation team, including staff conversant with AV (for film and sound)
- Constant invigilation
- Storage space for packaging and crates
- In-house technical support
- Onwards transport to next venue
- Insurance cover on site and to next venue
- Appropriate lighting facilities and environmental conditions.

Cost:

£1,500 for standard exhibition, but fee is scale-able depending on exhibition content.

For further information please contact

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