

# JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

312 SECOND AVENUE SOUTH  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104  
T: 206 903 6220 F: 206 903 6226  
JAMESHARRISGALLERY.COM

## PRESS RELEASE



### Alwyn O'Brien

December 2, 2010 to January 15, 2011\*

Opening Reception

Thursday, Dec. 2, 6 – 8pm

**\*Closed for the Holidays Dec. 19 - Jan. 3**

Gallery hours are Tues. - Sat. 11:00am - 5:00pm

& Monday by appointment

Additional images are available upon request

Left:

*Stories of Looking*, 2010

Porcelain and Glaze

13" x 14" x 9"

*Whence came those clouds of spiritual wonderment and pale dread, in which the white phantom saild in all imaginations* Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present our first solo exhibition by Canadian artist Alwyn O'Brien. A recent graduate from the University of Washington MFA program, O'Brien creates both slip cast and hand built vessel shaped forms out of porcelain. The objects in this exhibition were inspired by manmade berms and piles found at waste sites or at location of development on Salt Springs Island. For O'Brien, the piles are the residue of human activity; a collection of natural materials from the clearings of waste, incorporating aspects of decay and birth. Thus piles in the artist's mind "with its etymology of pyre/vessel becomes a repository of waste and memory...landscape memory, one where cultural activity is as implicated as natural so to speak."

The works on view present forms and ideas that have evolved slowly and deliberately in tandem with the artist's working process. Thinking about the accretion of history, memory and the residue of experience, O'Brien's makes lacey vessel from hand rolled coils. Irregular in shape and chaotic in the way the coils are used to construct volume; each vessel becomes an organic mass of tendrils, while taking on classical historical forms. Pinching, rolling and fingerprints show signs of the hand and connect the material and shape to bodily memory. In one work, two vessels sit side by side, their tops linked together by a delicate tangle of ropelike form. They communicate with each other through a sinewy of synapses, both pushing and pulling. White is the primary color for the glaze, which lets the forms speak for themselves.

Alwyn O'Brien was born on Salt Spring Island, B.C. Her ceramic practice has taken her across Canada, studying at Capilano College, in Vancouver, Sheridan College of Ontario, the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. She received her MFA in 2010 the University of Washington in Seattle and her BFA from Emily Carr Institute. In 2009 she was the recipient of a Mayor's Arts Award from Vancouver, B.C.