Carole Windham finds inspiration in ceramic tradition for her witty, often irreverent work. Her series on the theme of Sigmund Freud’s life and ideas and a further piece entitled ‘Pugilists’ refer to the tradition of 19th century Staffordshire figurative ceramics, and her wall-mounted chargers owe a debt to Thomas Toft’s commemorative slipware. She has described her work as ‘… a physical manifestation of my life and times, and a ceramic documentation of my experience … souvenirs from the World of Windham’.

Some of the works in the Freud series have autobiographical elements and this is most apparent in Free Association, a self portrait of the artist being psycho-analysed by a bust of Freud that is placed in an elevated position on a pedestal. The tableau Royal Road, whose title comes from Freud’s view of dreams as the ‘Royal Road to the Unconscious’, contains much darker and more disturbing imagery and was made at the time when Windham’s sister was terminally ill. Its cast of characters includes Cerberus, the three-headed canine guardian of the gates of Hades and a further ghoulish figure. Her depiction of Freud echoes the figure in Magritte’s ‘The Reckless Sleeper’, a Surrealist work that draws on the unconscious of the artist and his dreams. The idea for Venus with Penis came from Freud’s writings on penis envy, although she points out that ‘it’s not actually about being envious. It is more concerned with being proud of both the male and female aspects of me.’

The theme of Narcissus and Echo is the monstrousness of the obsession with self: Narcissus gazes into the pool, but we can see a different version to the view he sees of himself. His narcissism causes him to be cruel to the reflection of Echo, who loves him. But through his indifference she fades away and eventually becomes invisible. Munich Park Hotel, 1912 tells another kind of story. Its title refers to a luncheon meeting of the Psychological Society at the eponymous hotel at which Freud and Jung argued about Jung’s interest in the newly discovered Piltdown figures (the heads of which are represented on the base of the sculpture). The work shows the outcome of the disagreement, after Freud fainted at the table and Jung, the junior in age, took the role of parent by carrying him out of the restaurant.

The Pugilists are Brian Sewell, Art Critic for the London Evening Standard and Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate who are seen sparring in front of the landmark Bankside building. The original flatback “Pugilists” was made to commemorate a boxing match between John Carmel Heenan and Tom Sayers, legendary bare knuckle fighters of the Victorian period. Windham’s alternative sparring partners represent eternal artistic dualities: tradition and modernism, craft and concept, oppositions which she sees as defining one another and which need the other to exist.

Carole Windham studied at Stoke-on-Trent College of Art, Manchester Polytechnic and for an MA at the Royal College of Art. She has since worked as an artist and lecturer, including a spell with Funk ceramicist Robert Arneson at the University of California at Davies in the early 80s. Her work is found in numerous private, corporate and public collections including those of Save and Prosper Insurance Group, Aberystwyth Arts Centre and Brighton Pavilion Museum and can also be seen in Tate Britain’s Rude Britannia exhibition later this year.

The Project Space curators are Tessa Peters and Janice West