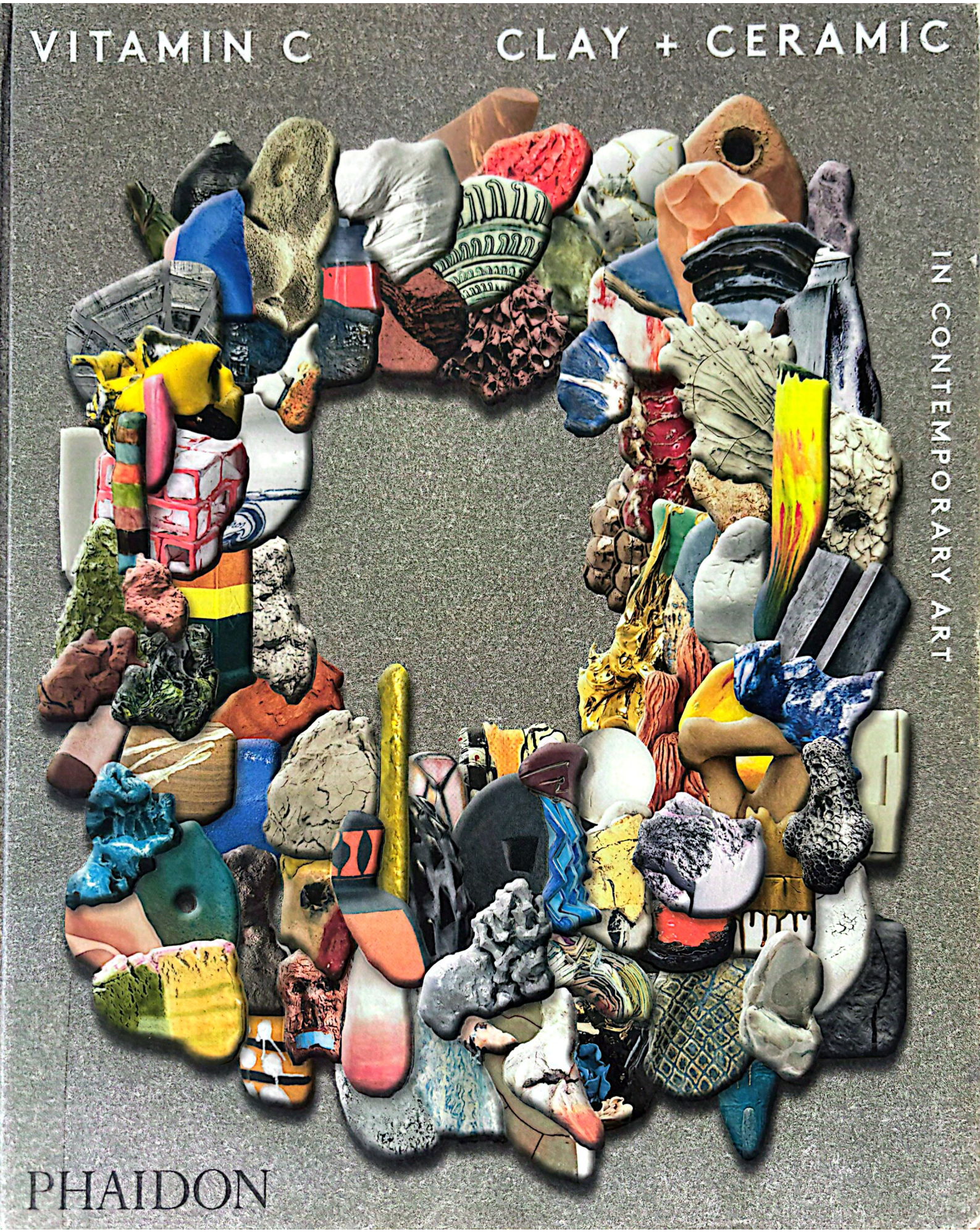
VITAMIN C

CLAY + CERAMIC

IN CONTEMPORARY ART



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VITAMIN C CLAY + CERAMIC

IN CONTEMPORARY ART



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When Phaidon Press launched *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting* in 2002, the first 'Vitamin' book, the idea of a substantial, medium-specific survey of contemporary art was radical. Its title derived from curator Francesco Bonami's 1994 article for *Flash Art* magazine, which reflected painting's vital endurance amidst whisperings of its imminent death. The book's selected artists were nominated by leading international art world professionals (our continued method), and ranged from those who used the medium exclusively to those with a broader practice incorporating paint among other media. The selection became a prescient hot-list, with many artists rising to critical acclaim, and so the book series was born.

Fifteen years later, over a quarter of a million 'Vitamin' books – examining painting, drawing, photography or sculpture – have been bought by art lovers across the world. This latest volume expands the legacy of the series. As a medium-specific subject, clay and ceramic were chosen in response to a clear shift in contemporary perceptions of these ancient materials – artists, curators and collectors connecting with them afresh. As curator Clare Lilley's introductory essay discusses, clay has been creatively used for millennia. It is a natural part of the earth, abundant around the world. Many of us have experienced working with it, perhaps during childhood, and most people use clay in its fired form – ceramic – in our everyday lives.

Looking back over recent Western history, clay has primarily produced functional 'craft' objects – in opposition to the category of 'fine art'. Furthermore, it has been relegated to the role of a mere preparatory stage for other more 'serious' sculptural mediums, including bronze. Ceramics education, in Britain in particular, all but disappeared in the late 1980s, specialist departments being removed from many schools and art colleges. More recently, however, the boundaries between high art and craft have blurred. Clay has become increasingly central in contemporary art, and while many artists today are not formally trained in the medium's traditional techniques, instead they discover its physical satisfaction.

Inviting our nominators to propose one or more artists for whom clay or ceramics is crucial to their practice, we were overwhelmed by the number of responses. These included an immensely diverse range of sculptures, but also installations, environments, performances, animations and video works. In 102 newly commissioned texts, our writers unravel the appeal of clay's material working processes. It is described as being rolled, ripped, pulled, prodded, perforated, squeezed, poked, kneaded, fingered, folded and fragmented, its tactility and bodily resonance seeing artists using dextrous fingers and palms to activate the earth. Indeed, the whole body is often involved when shaping vast masses of clay: bending over to push, squatting to shape, stamping to flatten, pulling back the arm to pummel and punch, and even lying down to be covered by its dust. It is used in its raw state as part of nature; made liquid; left to dry and crack; encountered as a found material, intact or fragmented with archaeological appeal; or it is fired, often repeatedly, as glazes are applied in stages.

The glazing process reinforces ceramic's visceral appeal – vitreous coatings that began life as sloppy liquids are applied to the surface in a variety of ways. As seen on examples throughout the book, these glazes offer a rainbow of colours ranging from candy pink, coral and lilac to cobalt blue, earthenware brown, canary yellow, teal, aquamarine, scarlet red, lime green, gold and silver. The hues are often unpredictable, revealing themselves only through the firing process. Traditionally, glazes have broadly fallen into five categories – lead, tin, feldspathic, ash and salt – and yet more modern materials have rendered these groupings obsolete. We also discovered that clay can be deceitful: what appears to be hand-sculpted clay with characteristic smooth or rough textures can be bronze – originally modelled in clay and retaining this mark-making and glazed to imitate clay's characteristic textures.

What we primarily discovered in compiling this survey is that art made from clay and ceramic is every bit as varied, dynamic and exciting as the more mainstream mediums that have been represented in the previous 'Vitamin' books. While pottery purists may lament some visual artists' untutored adoption of clay, perceiving that it undermines the highly-skilled techniques of studio ceramicists, the diverse artistic approaches presented within this volume will captivate readers with clay's versatile mutability and indefatigable creative potential.

Louisa Elderton and Rebecca Morrill
Editors, VITAMIN C

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In 2009 the art critic Roberta Smith wrote in *The New York Times* that ceramic has 'one of the richest histories of any medium on the planet,' going on to state, 'It can't be said enough that the art-craft divide is a bogus concept regularly obliterated by the undeniable originality of individuals who may call themselves artists, designers or artisans.'[1] The artists presented in this volume consider clay as core to their work or as a vital strand within a wider, multi-disciplinary practice. Continuing the legacy of preceding generations, they have come to clay for countless different reasons and, in so doing, have collapsed distinctions between crafts-person, maker, sculptor, artist. Perhaps any perceived divide is less to do with the processes and materials, which after all are not so very different to those of sculpture; nor because of expression or concept over technical skill or dexterity, although it's notable that many quite deliberately create work that alludes to childish or hobbyist techniques and imagery. Rather, the forum in which works are encountered and discussed may be more pertinent, and the last decade has seen a notable shift in the display of ceramic art from workshop and shop to gallery and museum, from craft magazine to art magazine. The art/craft divide aside, the artists selected for this publication are united in celebrating one of the most ancient of creative materials in exploratory and diverse ways, connecting to something deep in the earth and deep within our collective human memory. While not attempting a complete survey of clay's fascinating history, nor an overview of current practitioners, this essay explores some progenitors and considers the developing status of ceramic art so as to offer a wider context for the artists showcased in this book.

A human compulsion to create art

Objects made from clay reveal periods of ancient human activity for which we otherwise have few remaining records. While not as old as the earliest stone tools or cave paintings, ceramic artefacts nevertheless divulge the intricate paths of human life and the traces of long extinct peoples. For many cultures across the world, pottery vessels have been essential to domesticated life; while, for thousands of years, the decorative art that ordinary people owned was often in the form of clay figurines and vases. Clay fragments and objects therefore predominate in archaeological sites and pottery is a crucial guide to understanding the development of human life.

One of our most important archaeological sources, revealing a plethora of prehistoric artefacts, is the Upper Paleolithic site of Dolní Věstonice in what is now the Czech Republic. Giving insight into the culture of Ice Ace people in central Europe, the finds include carved ivory likenesses of a man and woman (she is possibly our earliest portrait) and the remains of a kiln, together with hundreds of fired ceramic figurines depicting humans and animals, including mammoth, rhinoceros, lion, owl and bear. It wouldn't be for another fifteen thousand years that the earliest known Japanese Jōmon pottery vessels would be made. Dated at 29,000–25,000 BCE, the Dolní Věstonice clay 'Venus' is typically abundant, with large breasts, curvaceous thighs and slack belly.

In *The Mind in The Cave*, archaeologist David Lewis-Williams makes the assertion that the making of art in this period was a social activity[2] and while the purpose of the prehistoric Venus figures is debated – they are variously considered to have engendered fertility or played a spiritual role in communities with shamanistic traditions – it is clear that they took many hours and much effort to create. The Dolní Věstonice Venus and other figures testify to a human compulsion to create art, a hardwired need to render in material a response to the world. They appear to be necessary things, indicating that the making of art has a social purpose imperative to our being. As such they offer a powerful endorsement of humanity.

Clay's ubiquity and utility

The pioneering nineteenth-century American archaeologist William Henry Holmes wrote that, 'Clay has no inherent qualities of a nature to impose a given form or class of forms upon its products, as have wood, bark, bone, or stone. It is so mobile as to be quite free to take form from its surroundings, and where extensively used will record or echo a vast deal of nature and of coexistent art.'[3] This most abundant and protean of materials is intrinsic to human development and the progression of societies; borne of necessity, early vessels most frequently mimic natural shapes like gourds, conch shells or human and animal heads. Before industrialization, they are shaped by human hands, gradually acquiring embellishment together with technical and aesthetic features. Sculptural objects developed in a parallel fashion and, while differing in a multiplicity of ways, both reveal the human need to create objects beyond the purely functional. They each illustrate a profound necessity to make forms derived from the imag-ination, with clay's particular haptic qualities informing the process of making through the sense of touch.

Of course clay has been fundamental to the development of bronze casting, one of the principal sculptural processes since at least 3,700 BCE when it originated in the Judean Desert. Until relatively recently, clay was the

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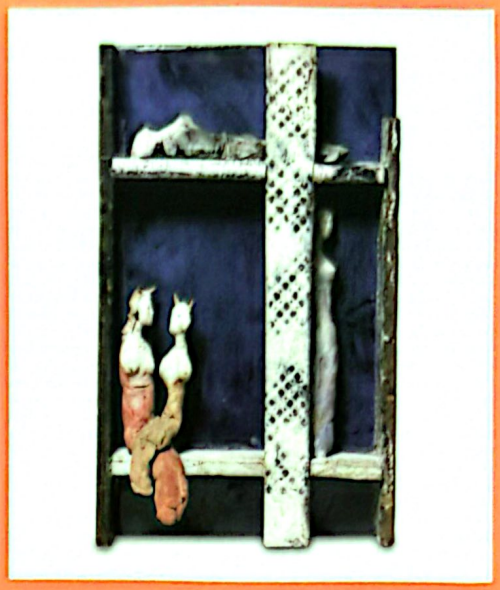
Venus of Dolní Vestonice
29,000–25,000 BCE
Clay (fired at a relatively low temperature)
11.1 × 4.3 cm (4 ⅜ × 1 ¾ in)
Moravské zemské muzeum, Brno, Czech Republic

Auguste Rodin
Monumental Head of Balzac, 1897
Glazed stoneware
47 × 44 × 38 cm
(18 ½ × 17 ¼ × 15 in)
Maison de Balzac, Paris

Pablo Picasso
Femme débout ('Standing Woman'), 1945
Terracotta
26.5 × 5 × 6.9 cm
(10 ⅜ × 2 × 2 ¾ in)

Fausto Melotti
Teatrino ('Little Theatre'), c.1950
Glazed ceramic, painted clay
46 × 30 × 9 cm
(18 ⅛ × 11 × 3 ½ in)





generating material in the production of all cast sculpture, although the tactile qualities of clay are often intentionally lost during the elaborate process of casting. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe, artists such as Edgar Degas, Auguste Rodin and Medardo Rosso reclaimed clay's expressive qualities; in many of their bronzes, the finger marks of the artist and evidence of the process of formation are deliberately retained. Rodin's seven-metre (twenty-three-foot) masterwork *The Gates of Hell*, commissioned in 1880, was not cast in bronze until after his death in 1917. Because it was impossible to keep the eventual 186 unfired clay figures adequately damp, they dried and fell away from the whole composition, and were subsequently reworked by Rodin and cast as individual sculptures, such as *The Thinker* and *The Kiss*.[4] The dexterity with which an artist like Rodin could shape clay made it central to his production; in lively fired clay 'sketches', he created clay models from which to carve monumental marble sculptures, and he even produced fully fired and glazed sculpture, such as the outstanding *Monumental Head of Balzac*, made around 1897 in glazed stoneware with the engineer-potter Paul Jeanneney, who succeeded in replicating the type of colour and texture found in Japanese pottery.

Picasso's ceramics

Picasso's very early bronze sculptures, such as *The Jester* of 1905, indicated his expert working of clay, but it wasn't until the 1940s that he expressly used clay as a material in itself. The German Occupation of France ended in 1944 and Picasso spent the summer of 1945 on the Côte d'Azur, forming a number of lovely, simply formed terracotta figures that resemble latter-day Venuses, and kindling a close relationship with clay that would last for five years. Working with the Madoura workshop of Suzanne and Georges Ramié in Vallouris, Picasso modelled yet more elementary seated and standing figures, both glazed and unglazed, and worked with tools and painterly glazes to create decorative works like *Owl* (1949). By throwing and then modelling pots, he made hybrid vessel-sculptures such as *Standing Bull (Vase)* (c.1947) and *Vase: Woman* (1948). The 1948 exhibition 'Poterie et une sculpture de Picasso' at the French Communist Party-run gallery, Maison de la pensée francaise in Paris, launched this new period and, in 1964, Françoise Gilot explained how, 'Artistically [the Paris exhibition] made something of a sensation because it was the first time this new aspect of his creativity had been shown. That series was the finest – at least the most inventive – of all his pottery because that was the time of discovery, the period of the amphora in the form of a woman and the combined forms he put together in the first surge of his inspiration ... Those who understand to what degree Pablo had renewed the potter's art were very excited by what they saw.'[5] With the publication of *Les Sculptures de Picasso* in 1948, which illustrated almost all of Picasso's sculptures made between 1902 and 1946, including the ceramics (documented in stunning photographs by Brassaï) Picasso joined the flowering of ceramic as a sculptural type in post-war Europe.

Ceramic in Europe during and after the Second World War

During the 1930s Fausto Melotti (1901–86) worked in the Milan porcelain factory Richard Ginori and there made vessels and Cycladic-inspired abstracted elements. Responding to the near destruction by aerial bombings of his Milan studio and its contents in 1943, Melotti began making more crudely formed ceramic sculptures, firing them in a rented muffle kiln. Ruptured by his experience of war, he returned to the figurative, producing lonesome figures, often in a state of silent abandonment, such as *Orfeo* ('Orpheus', 1945) and the wretched *Gatto cane* ('Cat Dog', 1948). From this time on, delicately structured, polychromatic shallow relief interiors and stage sets (called *Teatrini*) – where incomprehensible metaphysical dramas between melancholic individuals were played out – remained an important part of his production, as were unglazed terracotta *Diavoli* ('Devils') and elementary human forms: 'I have to confess that the war upset me very much. You can't even think about making abstract art when there's something inside your soul that I'm not saying leads you toward desperation, but towards figures of desperation.'[6] Melotti worked almost exclusively in clay until 1959 and, while he went on to also develop an extensive body of spatial constructions in wire, wood, glass and bronze, his painted clay and glazed porcelain sculptures, murals and walls continued to evolve until 1961, offering alternately mystical, poetic, lively and grotesque reflections on human relationships.

Elsewhere in Europe, other artists were extending or beginning a relationship with clay. In France, Germaine Richier (1902–59), a contemporary of Alberto Giacometti and Marino Marini, was exploring her own existential route, modelling clay to make powerful, earthy figures such as *Nu / La Grosse* ('Nude'/'The Large', 1939) and, from the mid-1940s, combining clay with plaster and found objects to make sculptures such as *La Montagne* ('The Mountain', 1955–6). In *L'Eau* ('Water', 1953–4), in which the neck of an ancient terracotta amphora becomes the neck of a seated female figure, the original pottery was incorporated into the clay model, prior to being cast in plaster and then in bronze.[7]

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- Lucio Fontana
  Sfere (concetto spaziale sferico), 1957
  Terracotta with varnish and terracotta with rust
  Ø 29 cm (11 ⅜ in) and Ø 32 cm (12 ⅝ in)
  Museo Internazionale delle ceramiche in Faenza, Italy

- Joan Miró
  Personnage, 1992 (posthumous)
  Earthenware and mixed media
  342 cm (134 ⅝ in)
  Installation view at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK



In Britain, following war service or war experience, the artists dubbed by Sir Herbert Read as representing the 'Geometry of Fear' generation, including William Turnbull, Elisabeth Frink, Reg Butler and Kenneth Armitage, pushed clay in direct and forceful ways to make gestural works, although princi-pally in the service of bronze. Like Henry Moore, Richier, Melotti and Joan Miró, theirs was a generation grounded in a humanist tradition that celebrated both the fundamental position of the human figure and modernism, with an emphasis on imagery that responded to a post-World War Two psyche.

Meanwhile Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), who collaborated before and after the war with Melotti, was in Argentina developing bodies of work in glazed ceramic that also responded to the instability and trauma of a world at war. His densely glazed *Via Crucis* ('Stations of the Cross') and *Assunzione* ('Assumption') series of works of 1947 conflate biblical reference with horrific renderings of man in conflict. It is perhaps simplistic to claim a recuperative benefit of working clay, although the visceral and sensual sensation of manipulating the material has primal associations that appear to offer comfort. Perhaps more pertinent is clay's association of going back to basics, to the elementary and essential. For at least a year following his major Tate retrospective in 1973, William Turnbull produced only hand-sized, barely formed clay sculptures, almost like newborn things, describing how he 'had a tremendous drive to start at the beginning again ... I was trying to do things as if I wasn't thinking.'[8] Such is clay's primal, visceral quality, connecting us time and again to a human ancestry.

Post-war collaborations

After the war, both Melotti and Fontana would collaborate with the architect and designer Gio Ponti (1891–1979), creating large ceramic sculptural objects and entire walls of ceramic tiles and panels. These collaborative and individual expressions were a marriage of expansive and hand-crafted processes that, from the 1950s through to the 1980s, were also seen in the work of Joan Miró with Josep Llorens Artigas and Joan Gardy Artigas in Gallifa; Picasso with the Madoura workshop in Vallauris; Antoni Tapiès and Eduardo Chillida with Hans Spinner in Grasse, France; Marc Chagall on the Côte d'Azur; and Lucio Fontana, Asger Jorn and others – such as the Cuban Wilfredo Lam and Chilean Roberto Matta – in Albissola, Italy. Endlessly inventive and shifting easily between styles and processes, many of these artists found in clay a relatively inexpensive material that was actually and symbolically wedded to the earth, together with the energy of workshop collaborations. Emerging from war experiences, ceramic also offered a democratization of art, particularly by bringing contemporary art into the home and – through murals and other architectural schemes – into the public realm. In her review of the first Venice Biennale since the war in 1948, Lisa Ponti wrote, 'sculpture ... remains in crisis: and we see our sculptor-ceramicists making the most of this crisis ... In certain respects, this lively intervention of ceramics is somewhat like a florescence of the baroque, provisional, capricious, in reaction to classical sculpture, which is exhausted.'[9]

It is notable that the majority of these artists made ceramic sculptures on a collaborative basis, whereas Melotti, with his early ceramics training, was more able to work alone. Extending the theory of Spatialism that he developed in Argentina during the war years, Fontana's work became increasingly abstracted, with slashed, sliced and punctured surfaces. Working in Albissola with Umberto Ghersi, Fontana's exceptional ceramic sculptures found their apotheosis in 1960 in the installation at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice of his 'Nature series of variously sized, solid clay spheres – some of them a metre (forty inches) in diameter – that he gashed, gouged, cut and slashed, fired and cracked. A powerful, enveloping experience, the *Nature* installation marked both a high point and cessation of Fontana's work in ceramic as he turned to creating immersive environments. Importantly, he was one of a generation of inter- and post-war sculptors who claimed and reclaimed a broad range of materials and processes to make their art, and were precursors to the radical Italian Arte Povera movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Joan Miró and earth

In artists who appreciate clay's attributes and amalgamate them into their practice, we often see a tendency towards a physical and emotional relationship with the land. While Joan Miró (1893–1983) did not start to work clay or to cast in bronze until he was in his fifties, and by then established as an internationally acclaimed painter, he was always clear that his connection to the earth of Catalonia and later of Mallorca, was fundamental, stating, 'It is contact with the earth that enables me to fly.'[10] Working from 1944 with the great ceramicists Josep Llorens Artigas and his son Joan Gardy Artigas in Gallifa, near Barcelona, in some respects the activity began as an antidote to the trauma of war, to Franco's rule of Spain, and to the legacy of Miró's military service of 1915–17. In 1948 he spoke of the importance of creating form, 'the need to

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- Isamu Noguchi
  Love of Two Boards, 1950
  Seto stoneware
  25.7 × 25.7 × 14 cm
  (10 ¼ × 10 ¼ × 5 ½ in)
  The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York

- Peter Voulkos
  Black Butte Divide, 1958
  Glazed stoneware
  120 × 104 × 81 cm
  (47 ¼ × 41 × 32 in)
  Norton Simon Museum, Pasedena, CA



mould with my hands – to pick up a ball of wet clay like a child and squeeze it. From this I get a physical satisfaction that I cannot get from drawing and painting.'[11] Making the first of his clay sculptures with Artigas in 1946, including *Oiseau lunaire* ('Moon Bird') and *Oiseau solaire* ('Sun Bird') for the rest of his working life Miró created extraordinary sculptures that incorporated the forms of the cabbages, gourds and tomatoes he grew in his Palma garden, peasant utensils, wire, basketry and other found objects that he combined and unified with clay or wax. Many of these were cast in bronze, although some, like the 342-centimetre (134-inch) high *Personnage* (1992), remained as autonomous earthenware and mixed media sculptures. Seeking and finding authentic expression both rooted in and beyond the earthly world, Miró called these *personnages* his 'phantasmagorical monsters'. Often they convey a sexual or certainly sensual force, and almost all have a symbolic means of defecation, thereby alluding to the daily cycle of life. At the Fondation Maeght in Saint Paul de Vence in the south of France, they come together with structures and surfaces to form the breathtaking and largely ceramic 'gesamkunstwerk', *Labyrinth*, inaugurated in 1964.

Isamu Noguchi's fluidity

In many respects, the work of American-born Isamu Noguchi (1904–88) resulted from his quest to reconcile dual Japanese-American identities and his publicly known illegitimacy. Gifted in modelling and carving, painting, dance, architecture and theatre and product design, ceramic was one of a host of media Noguchi mastered. Furthermore, his appreciation of the eminence of 'craft' in Japan, where the differences in status between the arts were less marked, enabled Noguchi to move fluidly between forms and materials in his lifelong explorations, most particularly into the public realm of 'art and leisure'. In 1950 twenty ceramic sculptures made in less than a week at a workshop in Seto are testament to his ability to bring together his many enquiries into a unique group of forms.

In 1927 Noguchi had worked in Constantin Brancusi's studio, but his first trip to Japan in 1931 brought to his attention Chinese Tang dynasty terracotta *mingqi* figures, as well as third- to sixth-century Japanese *haniwa* tomb figures. In the same year he had an intense period working in the Kyoto studio of the master potter Uno Ninmatsu, where Noguchi collected and trod his own coarse clay. Later, he noted the healing properties and authenticity of working clay, stating, 'I have since thought of my lonely self-incarceration then, and my close embrace of the earth, as a seeking after identity with some primal matter beyond personalities and possessions. In my work I wanted something irreducible, an absence of the gimmicky and clever.'[12]

Zen and the art of Californian ceramics

In the United States, significant developments in the approach to and perception of ceramic emerged through the second half of the twentieth century. Peter Voulkos (1924–2002) evolved a practice which began with tableware, but quickly became abstracted and sculptural and led to his founding, in 1954, the art ceramics department at the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. Moving to the University of California, Berkeley in 1959, where he also founded the ceramics programme within the department of design and decorative arts, he was tremendously influential – even gaining a mention in Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974)[13] – and continued to teach until 1985. Voulkos made abstract expressionist platters, vessels and objects which often demonstrated the mark of his hand, as well as deliberate and incidental breaks; structures that are dismembered, reconstructed and punctured. Using iron glazes, the sculptures are earthy, emphasize texture and materiality, and are often on a large scale, such as *Black Butte Divide* (1958).

A number of students within Voulkos's orbit at Otis and on the West Coast surfaced as significant artists, among them Billy Al Bengston, John Mason, Michael Frimkess (pp.98–99), Paul Soldner, Henry Takemoto, Jerry Rothman and Ken Price. With Rudy Autio and Jim Leedy in Colorado, Ken Shores in Oregon, and Robert Arneson in the Bay Area[14], they constituted a phenomenon that broke and merged an art and craft hierarchy. In 1961 Rose Slivka, the editor of the journal *Craft Horizons*, coined her notable description of them as constituting 'The New Ceramic Presence'.[15] In so doing, she rather side-stepped the European context, omitting to reference radical work by Asger Jorn, Fontana, Miró and Picasso; but in the sense that the American artists' work was defined almost entirely by ceramic and by experimentation, the moniker was valid.[16]

Where Arneson, Price and Frimkess, together with Magdalena Suarez Frimkess (pp.98–99), also took flight from the Europeans was in their vivid palette, references to the infantile and base, their riffing off cartoons and popular culture, and subversion of centuries-old ceramic forms – vases, platters, bowls, pots, cups and urns. In other words, they responded to and cross-fertilized with the disruptions and innovations in contemporary art across the world, with Arneson a lead figure in the Funk Art movement.

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Throughout his life Ken Price (1935–2012) made hugely diverse work, from brightly coloured, hard-edged, super-shiny and geometric constructions to amorphous deeply-pigmented slumps of organic matter and shiny sci-fi excrements that reveal their cellular innards. With Ron Nagle (pp.202–3) and Betty Woodman (pp.294–7), Price was one of the most influential figures of twentieth-century ceramic art, and collectively these artists blurred forever the distinctions between craft and art.

Antoni Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida and Anthony Caro

In the latter part of the twentieth century, three exceptional European artists developed innovative practices with clay in their later years. In 1981 the Basque artist Eduardo Chillida (1924–2002) introduced his Catalan friend Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012) to ceramicist Joan Gardy Artigas, thereby initiating a fruitful relationship and proliferation of ceramic sculpture. Using *terras xamotadas*, or fireclay, Tàpies made strong, weather-resistant sculptures, such as the two-metre (six-and-a-half-foot) *Sabatilla* ('Slipper', 1986). Applying enamel and inscribing the medium with his personal vocabulary of symbols brought ceramics fully into his repertoire, as seen in *T tombada* ('Fallen T', 1986) and *Cub-creu* ('Cube-Cross', 1988). For two years from 1986, Tàpies also worked in the south of France with the German ceramicist, Hans Spinner, leading to an output of gritty, powerful works made in Spinner's studio at Opio and the Galerie Lelong workshop at Grasse, near Cannes.

Like his steel and iron sculpture, Chillida's ceramic sculptures are solid, organic-geometric forms that investigate space and materiality. Entitled *Lurra* (the Basque word for earth) they, too, were produced with Hans Spinner during the 1980s and 1990s. Working in terracotta with a high proportion of grog (crushed fired clay) to help prevent cracking or exploding during firing, enabled Chillida to push the material and to confront new challenges: 'I believe works conceived *a priori* are born dead ... Is it not the decisive step for an artist to be almost always disoriented?'[17]

On Chillida's recommendation, British sculptor Anthony Caro (1924–2013) also worked with Spinner, again using the heavy grog clay. Caro described the physicality of working with Spinner: 'he picked up a bit of clay and threw it down. I knew now where I was going, I could see, I could see how he worked, the way he interacted with the clay. It was very physical. A big weight of clay didn't bother him, he liked it.'[18] The collaboration resulted in the first instance in *The Trojan War* (1995) series of sculptures, Caro's first and wholly unexpected foray into semi-figurative sculpture for some fifty years. 'This whole thing of sculpture is not some genius doing the thing himself, that's absolute nonsense. It's watching, it's being a radio antenna, seeing what other people do, seeing what material's different, seeing what place is different, seeing what approach is different.'[19] From working with clay were born a series of exceptional monumental works in ceramic that include *The Last Judgement* (1995–9) and *The Barbarians* (2000–02), rather impressively produced during the artist's seventies.

Ceramics at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf

At the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in Germany, Norbert Prangenburg (1949–2012) pursued an ambitious ceramic practice and from the 1980s until around 2005 he produced very large and complex faience-glazed ceramic sculptures with dynamic interplay between elements, surface texture and colour. Düsseldorf is an environment in which many contemporary artists have explored and extended the medium; not least Thomas Schütte (pp.262–3) whose consummate handling of diverse media is central to a lifetime's work that ranges from such prodigious sculpture as *Die Fremden* ('The Strangers', 1992), made for the portico of a department store in Kassel for *Documenta IX* and referencing the vandalization of local shelters made for refugees fleeing the First Gulf War in 1991, to the small but by no means diminutive *United Enemies* (1993–7) sculptures.

British-born Tony Cragg (b. 1949), who has taught at the Kunstakademie since 1978, resists committing to any single medium. He constantly pushes material to new limits, often working at the forefront of technology to explore how substances and forms affect and shape our ideas and emotions, with ceramic taking an important place within his output. Describing his creative process he has said, 'there's a type of infinity, as much on the leaf, the space, as the universe ... When you pound a lump of clay or any type of material, the same thing happens, and your mind starts moving, so the problem is finding links and correlation points. This moment when feeling becomes significant and important is, for me, the basis of creation'.[20] Similarly Rosemarie Trockel (pp.280–3), who also teaches at Düsseldorf, defies categorization as she moves effortlessly between drawing, knitting, video and sculpture, but her work in ceramic is a focal point, explored in Gladstone Gallery's 2006 exhibition, 'Rosemarie Trockel: Country Life, New Ceramics, and Pottery'. Here, the designation 'pottery' both emphasizes and subverts the hobbyist's craft.

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Left to right:

Eduardo Chillida
Lurra XIV, 1977
Terracota, 15 × 12 × 12 cm (6 × 4 ¾ × 4 ¾ cm)

Anthony Caro
The Barbarians - Golom, 2000–02
Terracotta, wood, leather and steel
193 × 155 × 136 cm (76 × 61 × 53 ½ in)

Peter Fischli & David Weiss
Popular Opposites: Theory and Practice Detail from 'Suddenly this Overview' 1981–present
Unfired clay, various dimensions, series of c.600 sculptures, from 6 × 7 × 5 cm to 82 × 83 × 5 cm (2 ¼ × 2 ¾ × 2 to 32 ¼ × 32 ¾ × 2 in)

Andy Goldsworthy
Clay Room, 2007
Clay dug from the grounds of Yorkshire Sculpture Park
Dried, sieved, mixed with human hair. Reconstituted and applied to the gallery walls. Many participants, 20 tons of clay, 300 litres of human hair, 180m² surface area, over 60 volunteers
Installation view, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK

Antony Gormley
Field for the British Isles, 1993
Terracotta, variable dimensions
c.40,000 figures, each 8 to 26 cm high (2 ¼ to 10 ¼ in)
Installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

Clay's consolidation

The use of clay as a bona fide material for the current generation of artists was thus consolidated by outstanding practitioners preceding them, and those included in this book continue to expand its extraordinary potential. In Britain, Grayson Perry (pp.236–9) has been an outspoken proponent for the validity of ceramic art; indeed, more radically, for the validity of pots – he refers to himself as a 'potter' rather than a 'ceramicist' deliberately to distance himself from his peers in the world of studio ceramics. In a sense, Perry doesn't care about the sliding scale of status for different art forms and has vociferously and fundamentally disrupted the status quo. Moreover, through his identity, personality and media presence, he reaches a large audience and claims an egalitarianism for contemporary art that is remarkable.

That ground is also held by China's most famous living artist, Ai Weiwei (pp.22–3), in so far as it's unlikely much of the audience ever considered comparisons of art and craft during his 2010 Tate Modern *Sunflower Seeds*, an overwhelming installation of eight million painted porcelain seeds. For him, the material is a means of communicating many ideas – from its perceived ordinariness to authenticity – and, importantly, Ai's continued creation of ceramic sculpture allows him to collaborate with and support workers in the ancient Chinese ceramic production town of Jingdezhen in the south of China.

Size matters

Today, the notion that ceramic art is somehow secondary to other plastic arts still persists for some. Size shouldn't matter, but scale does have significant impact on the perception of prestige. The limits defined by the dimensions of a kiln have necessarily constrained size; however, by accreting and assembling parts, artists are able to push boundaries and realize their ambitions. Consider the 'Field' series (1989–2003), comprising tens of thousands of terracotta figures assembled by Antony Gormley with hundreds of participants; Fischli & Weiss's panoply of naïve clay vignettes, such as *Suddenly this Overview* (1981/2006); Andy Goldsworthy's expansive clay walls and immersive spaces, like the extraordinary *Clay Room*[21] made in 2007; Edmund de Waal's large reliefs and entire walls of individual pots (pp.72–5). For these artists, clay is one of an armoury of media that enables exploration, direct expression and, often, collaboration. Importantly, its use connotes and highlights land, landscape, the human touch and primal impulses; by exercising Minimalism's tactic of repeating units, artists construct and explicate a sculptural language, taking it from the personal into the public domain.

Context is everything

The change in perception of work made in clay from 'craft' to 'high art' relates in part to the context in which such work has been exhibited since the turn of the millennium. For example, in 2004 (the year after Grayson Perry won the Turner Prize), Tate Liverpool presented an exhibition entitled 'A Secret History of Clay: From Gauguin to Gormley', which traced a history of artists working in clay through the twentieth century. Across the Atlantic, the University of Philadelphia ICA's 'Dirt on Delight: Impulses that Form Clay' exhibition of 2009 presented the work of twenty-two artists from across four generations for whom clay was at the core of their practice. It was followed in 2013 by a seminal exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, 'Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso 1943–1963' and, in Germany, 'Back to Earth. From Picasso to Ai Weiwei – The Rediscovery of Ceramics in Art' at the Herbert Gerisch-Stiftung in Neumünster. More recently, 'Ceramix: Rodin to Schütte' was presented in the home of French ceramics in Sèvres, as well as at La Maison Rouge, Paris in 2016. From anthropological museums collecting clay artefacts and ceramic crafts – to which successive generations of artists have turned for inspiration and understanding of the haptic form – to art museums showing and collecting ceramic art, there is a radical shift.

Working in parallel to the museum exhibitions, ceramic art has established a foothold in the commercial world, with young and major galleries featuring a broad range of work in clay alongside other sculptural forms. Concomitant to such presentations are increasing prices and status, with, for example, ceramic art taking a significant proportion of NADA's Miami Beach Fair in 2016, referred to by the online magazine Hyperallergic as 'alluring visions from a ceramic-filled future'.[22] In this respect, notable demonstrations of how boundaries have shifted are the representation by artists such as Edmund de Waal and Rachel Kneebone by Gagosian and White Cube galleries respectively, and the 2016 exhibition by Hauser & Wirth gallery of ceramics by Ken Price.

Along with others, these exhibitions and their publications highlight the importance and relevance of clay to successive artists for whom this malleable and adaptable medium presents physical opportunities as well as historical and sensory references. As Marin R. Sullivan points out in her essay for the Nasher Center exhibition catalogue, even in the 1940s contemporary critics of Melotti and Fontana, such as Gillo Dorfles, framed them as *scultori-ceramisti* as distinct from ceramic artisans. Cognizant

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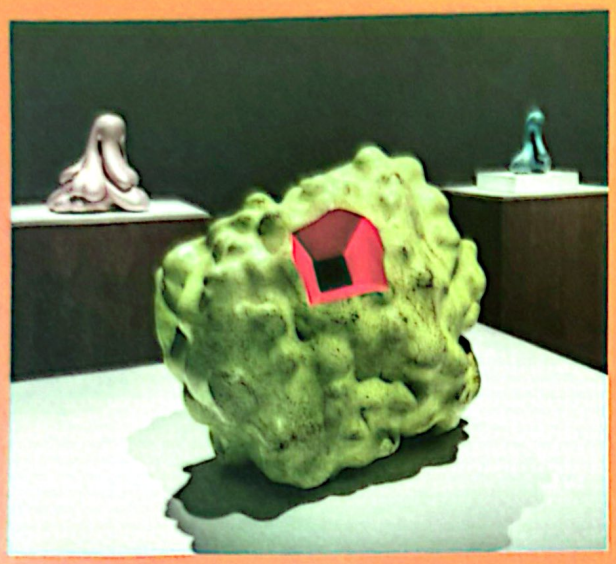



- Installation view, 'Ken Price: A Survey of Sculptures and Drawings, 1959–2006', Hauser & Wirth, London, 2016–17
- Joseph Beuys, 'Zeitgeist' exhibition, Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin, 1982
- Urs Fischer
  Last Supper, 2014
  Cast bronze, stainless steel armature. Three parts, overall: 144.8 × 767.1 × 147.3 cm (57 × 302 × 58 in)
- Not Vital
  (left to right, all 2016)
  HEAD + Chimney
  HEAD + LargeChimney
  Tongue on HEAD
  HEAD
  Broken HEAD on Broken Vase
  Ceramic, variable dimensions
  Installation view at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK

of the craft debate, and intent on separating himself from it, Melotti made his vessels far too large for any practical use and, if there was still any question, pinched their necks to prevent the insertion of flowers.[23] In 2006 a solo show of work by Betty Woodman at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York was a signifier of ceramic's changing fortunes, while her 2016 retrospective at London's ICA marked another important change in the perception of how medium in art has become increasingly irrelevant.

Experiential clay

Alongside the art market's embracing of ceramics, learning to work with clay has also gained popularity as a leisure activity. In cities, towns and villages in Britain and the United States, recent years have seen a surge in adults attending pottery classes, perhaps pointing in the developed world to a cultural yearning for the tangible and handmade – 'to touch with our eyes and to see with our hands'.[24] The drive to have 'experiences' (everything from travelling to fine dining) rather than simply acquiring capital, property and commodities has been identified as a wider cultural shift and one in which the boom in 'crafting' has a firm position.

Moreover, clay offers sensory impact and associations that are singular, perhaps even fundamental. Childhood memories of manipulating Plasticine, Play-Doh, Fimo or indeed clay, lead to an association of clay with 'play' and to something instinctive, innately human, visceral. We know how it feels to have a wristwatch in our mouths, yet who can remember the moment when their baby mouth explored this strange object; such explorations are not memories, but are intrinsic to our sensory corporeality by which we gain consciousness of our world. As philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote in relation to the phenomenology of perception, 'Tactile experience ... adheres to the surface of our body; we cannot unfold it before us, and it never quite becomes an object. Correspondingly, as the subject of touch, I cannot flatter myself that I am everywhere and nowhere; I cannot forget in this case that it is through my body that I go in the world, and tactile experience occurs "ahead" of me, and is not centred in me.'[25] Others better qualified than I can make the association between a toddler's interest in its own faeces and manipulating clay, but suffice to say that enormous pleasure is to be had from squeezing, rolling, shaping and refining this matter.

Moving, eruptive, living

Such understanding of creativity as central to human existence was fundamental to the life and works of one of the most influential of modern artists; for Joseph Beuys (1921–82), change and transformation, as well as emotional rootedness in our primal self, were essential to his practice. Beuys said of one of his most important works, *The End of the Twentieth Century* (1983–5), 'This is the end of the Twentieth Century. That is the old world, on which I impress the stamp of the new world. Look, the plugs, they are like plants from a stone age. I have drilled their funnel shapes with a lot of effort out of the basalt and then placed them back into their holds with felt and clay, so that they wouldn't hurt as much and stay warm. There is something moving, eruptive, living in this stiffened mass – just as the basalt itself was once pressed out of the interior of the earth.'[26] In his 1982 'Zeitgeist' exhibition at the Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin, Beuys installed a huge mound of clay, calling it *Hirschdenkmal* ('The Stag Monument') and surrounding it with sculptures and items from his life. This huge, tactile, movable mass pointed to the primal human, to instinct and touch, of which curator Norman Rosenthal said, 'there was something magic about the way he presented these pieces'.[27] From the assemblage, Beuys selected elements that he later cast, 'including, these rather extraordinary sausage-like objects – what you might call the most basic, either human or animal, dung. I put this rather crudely ... it was like making shit beautiful.'[28]

Collaboration and exchange

As participatory and collaborative practices across all the arts grow, so does exchange between maker and maker, and maker and viewer. The assertion that Neolithic art emerged as a social activity is pertinent with the persistence and growth of cooperative workshops like the Troy Town Art Pottery in London founded by Aaron Angell (pp.26–7). Describing itself as 'a radical and psychedelic workshop for artists ... also host to Town Gas, an innovative educational programme for local young people.'[29] It is both Angell's studio and a workshop that offers facilities such as kilns and a sharing of skills that few British art schools now teach, as well as conversation and exchange. Similarly, New Linthorpe pottery in Middlesbrough has workshops 'where people are invited to "make" with their own earth'.[30] Run by Emily Hesse (pp.120–1) and James Beighton, Linthorpe's utopian premise – of inspiring community sharing, of contact with and production of the earth, and of art's ability to change and improve life – is abundantly and deliciously clear. In the work of Swiss artist, Urs Fischer (born 1973), community participation and high art come together in monumental works in bronze, escalated in size from clay sculptures that retain

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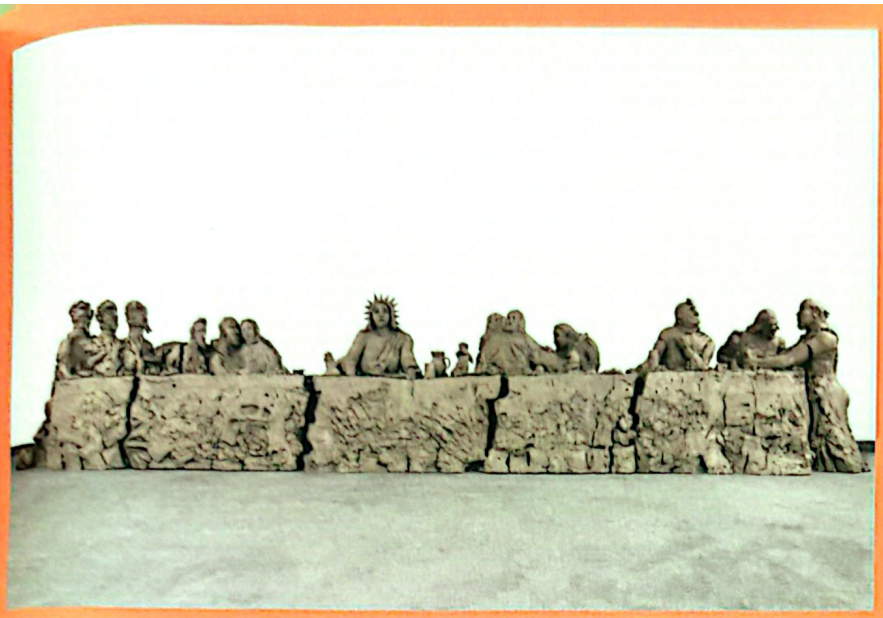



all the surface handling and nuance of their makers, so that the *Last Supper* (2014) and giant fairy-tale objects proclaim rapidity and the handmade as well as ambiguous authorship.

In an era where many artists don't identify themselves in relation to one specific medium, it isn't surprising that they should see clay as simply another possible material, ripe for exploration. Aaron Angell said of his experience as a visiting tutor to an art school sculpture department, 'most people have been using it [clay] as a means to an end, a sculptural material like any other'. He then went on to add, in relation to clay's increased popularity, 'To answer the question "why now?" – I think there is certainly a reaction against the kind of fabrication fetish that we have been seeing in a lot of work over recent years.'[31]

In considering the rise in artists working with ceramic, Richard Slee (pp.272–3) has another perspective, commenting that, in the wake of ceramics being all but dropped from the school curriculum in Britain, and the dominance of conceptual art teaching and concomitant deskilling of students, 'sometimes, if you take something away for a period, it becomes attractive again.'[32]

Failure and favour

Handling clay is only the start of the process; it is not an easy material to manipulate well and it has distinct rules about how to sustain its own weight and volume, of how it reacts to being fired. Clay is exacting and therefore, to stretch its possibilities, you must first be highly articulate in its language. Even the most proficient will experience failure, begging the question not only of its continued use but its growth in favour. Clay's mutability, its willingness to change and adapt, to bear witness to its own state of flux, to the hands that form it, are surely relevant. Furthermore, the failures – the cracks and fissures, burst bubbles and slumped forms that beset the potter – offer chance opportunities to the artist; in his recent series of vast ceramic 'HEADS', made in Jingdezhen in China, Swiss artist Not Vital (b. 1948) presented one exploded sculpture atop another, emphasizing the precariousness of the material and, by association, of life.

Creation stories that have mankind formed from clay are abundant in world religions and mythologies – Prometheus shaping man in clay while Athena breathed in life; the god Khnum creating human children from clay before placing them into their mother's womb; the Sumerian religion of the god Enki/Enlil forming man from clay and blood; as well as Judeo-Christian and Islamic beliefs. In modern-day Nigeria are found the oldest known African sculptures, the extraordinary terracotta Nok figures, made from 500 BCE, while over at least the last two millennia, around the globe we see clay formed not just into practical vessels, but figurines and sculpture. It is an irreducible material that continues to connect current practitioners to earth and to their own hands and body, endlessly multifarious and giving, while, by association, we too as viewers relate to its distinctly tangible state.

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31 Amy Sherlock, 'In Two Places', *frieze*, CLIIIX (May 2016), p.169.
32 Ibid.

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Originally training as a blacksmith before moving to London, Caroline Achaintre's work encompasses not just clay but a diverse range of media. Across her practice, she focuses on handcrafting techniques and her work has often been described in terms of the primitive or the carnivalesque.

Achaintre has a preference for paper clay (normal clay reinforced with fibre), and her ceramic sculptures are divided into three groups: masks hung on the wall (such as *Lee Vee Double D.*, 2016), sculptures displayed on a plinth or on a stand, and combined works made of a leather head to which a ceramic mask is attached (such as *Flaschengeist*, 2011). In contrast to her often highly coloured textile works or her drawings, the glazed surfaces of her ceramics resemble animal skins; indeed they sometimes incorporate leather or fake snakeskin. Spontaneous and quickly worked in quite a crude way, her ceramics still look malleable, soft and vulnerable.

Grouped together for display on plinths and structures designed by the artist, they form a theatre of the absurd. Isolated, they radiate a sense of solitude and abandon, and yet they keep an inner sense of humour. Reminiscent of some of Samuel Beckett's characters, they are, in fact, similar to Beckett's use of image as described by Gilles Deleuze in his 1995 text 'The Exhausted': 'The point is, the image doesn't define itself through the sublimeness of its content, but through its form – its "internal tension" – or through the force it gathers to make the void or to bore holes, to loosen the grip of words, to dry up the oozing of voices, so as to disengage itself from memory and reason: little alogical image, amnesic, almost aphasic, now standing in the void, now shivering in the open. The image is not an object but a "process".'

Prior to this ceramic work, Achaintre created small drawings in ink on paper, similar to Rorschach tests. Characters appeared in these dramatically charged scenes, stuck between abstraction and disfiguration, precision and looseness. Menacing, sexual and playful, their inspiration lies in horror movies, clowns, heavy metal imagery and masks.

After experimenting with wall painting and installations, and following a desire to expand the scale of her ink drawings while still preserving their domesticity, in 2002 she transposed a work on paper into the first of many rugs. In their use of colour and organic materials, as well as the labour-intensive nature of their making, these brightly hued rugs mark a clear move towards sculpture and even interplay with their surrounding architecture. In 2007, she began turning her works on paper into small sculptures displayed on plinths. But paper is fragile and doesn't have a long lifespan. The move to ceramics came from this frustration, rather than from an urge to experiment with clay itself. In 2009 she enrolled in an evening class to explore how she could turn her paper sculpture into solid objects – and her work with clay began. • Vincent Honoré

Caroline Achaintre Born 1969, France. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; 2016 – 'Limbo', Arcade, London; 'boo', c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels; 2015 – 'BP Spotlight: Caroline Achaintre', Tate Britain, London; 2014 – 'Present/Future, Illy Prize', Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; 2013 – 'Camp Coo', UH Galleries, Hertfordshire, UK; 2012 – 'Trip – Dip', Arcade, London; 2008 – 'Novelty', Mirko Mayer, Cologne, Germany. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Entangled: threads and making', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; 2016 – 'British Art Show 8', Leeds Art Galley and then touring nationally; 'Making & Unmaking', Camden Arts Centre, London; 'Corridor Plateau VI', DREI, Cologne, Germany; 2015 – Folleree & Folleroo, Arcade, London; 2014 – 'Decorum', The Power Station of Art, Shanghai, and touring to Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris; 'Vernacular Alchemists', Centre d'Art Contemporain Passerelle, Brest, France; 'More Material', Salon 94, New York; 2013 – 'Six Possibilities for a Sculpture', La Loge, Brussels.



Caroline Achaintre

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← *Lee Vee Double D.*, 2016
Ceramic, leather
80 × 37 × 13.5 cm
(31 ½ × 14 ¾ × 5 ¼ in)

→ *Theresa II*, 2016
Ceramic
24 × 24 × 24 cm
(9 ½ × 9 ½ × 9 ½ in)

→→ *Flaschengeist*, 2011
Ceramic, leather, foam
32 × 23 × 29 cm
(12 ⅝ × 9 ⅛ × 11 ⅜ in)

↘ *She-Balls*, 2011
Ceramic
29 × 20 × 8 cm
(11 ⅜ × 7 ⅞ × 3 ⅛ in)

↓ *Panto*, 2012
Ceramic, leather
33 × 38 × 22 cm
(13 × 14 ⅞ × 8 ¾ in)









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↑ *Chubber*, 2013
Ceramic, leather
35 × 33 × 24 cm
(3¾ × 13 × 9½ in)

↗ *Sinus*, 2015
Ceramic
40 × 42 × 5 cm
(15¾ × 16½ × 2 in)

Achaintre

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Ai Weiwei is widely known for an inclusive conceptual practice. His art explores a plethora of cultural concerns, often with a decidedly political and critical bent, a stance which has positioned him as contemporary China's most prominent dissident artist. Questioning issues such as censorship and the control over citizens exerted by the government, he openly addresses the authoritarian assaults and the incarceration that he has personally suffered on account of his critique of government policies.

For more than two decades, this endeavour has encompassed a vivid interest in traditional Chinese craft techniques – introduced in his works in the shape of ceramics, antique carved furniture, porcelain objects and tea, as well as in wooden structures and window frames from destroyed houses and temples dating from the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Ceramics have featured in Ai Weiwei's works since the early 1990s. A key work is the early – and still controversial – *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), a photographic triptych documenting a performance in which the artist dropped what appears to be an antique ceramic urn from the Han dynasty of around 2,000 years ago, letting it smash on the ground. Whether the piece involved a fake urn or a real antique remains open to debate, and part of the controversy surrounding the work comes from whether the act of vandalism was real or simulated. Either way, the triptych both documents and exhibits the lack of protection or deliberate destruction of cultural heritage which has been integral to China's modern history – from the iconoclasm of the Cultural Revolution to the rampant city developments driving contemporary China's turn to economic capitalism.

Much of the artist's ceramic work revolves around questions of globalization and mass production and how such cultural shifts shape the destiny of historic craft techniques. In one series ceramic vases from the Han dynasty are daubed with red Coca-Cola logos (1993); in another group of works named *Coloured Vases* (2006), antique ceramics are dipped in colourful industrial paint. Such interventions pose questions around whether the value of these objects of cultural heritage is diminished or increased by being turned into contemporary art commodities.

A monumental testimony to the skill and years of handed-down knowledge embedded in traditional craft techniques was unfolded in the large-scale installation *Sunflower Seeds* (2010). Conceived for Tate Modern's industrial Turbine Hall, the artist covered the floor with a layer of more than a hundred million porcelain replicas of sunflower seeds. Each seed was individually made and hand painted in the city of Jingdizhen, a centre for porcelain fabrication since the days of Imperial China. Ai Weiwei engaged more than 1,600 expert artisans in small craft shops to make the seeds, and the elaborate production process was documented in a video shown in an adjacent room at Tate Modern. A common Chinese snack, as well as a symbol of the people in Maoist China, the intricately made sunflower seeds, which visitors were initially allowed to touch, invited reflections on the everyday habits of mass society. The seeds themselves were palpably delicate; monumentally piled together, each was a token of painstaking skill and attention to detail, resonating with notions of cultural value in a globalized world. • Marie Laurberg

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Ai Weiwei Born 1957, Beijing. Lives and works in Beijing and Berlin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017– 'Ai Weiwei: Law of the Journey', National Gallery in Prague; 2016– 'Ai Weiwei. Libero', Palazzo Strozzi, Florence; '#SafePassage', Foam, Amsterdam; 'Ai Weiwei: translocation – transformation', 21er Haus, Vienna; 2015 – 'Ai Weiwei', Royal Academy of Arts, London; '@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz', FOR-SITE Foundation, San Francisco. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Towards A Larger World', Moderna Museet, Malmö, Sweden; 2015 – 'Andy Warhol | Ai Weiwei', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; 'A brief history of the future', Louvre, Paris; 2014 – '1 + 1 = 1: When Collections Collide', Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts, Canada; 2013 – German Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; 2012 – 'No Borders', Arnolfini, Bristol, UK; 2011 – The Magic of Clay: Ceramics in Contemporary Art', GI Holtegaard, Holte, Netherlands.





↑↑ *Han Dynasty Urn with Coca-Cola Logo*, 1993
Urn from the Western Han dynasty (206–24 BCE), paint
25 × 28 × 28 cm
(9 ⅞ × 11 × 11 in)

↑ *Sunflower Seeds* [detail], 2010
Porcelain
Variable dimensions
Installation view, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London

↗↗ *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995
Three black-and-white photographs
Each 148 × 121 cm
(58 ¼ × 47 ⅝ in)

→ *Coloured Vases*, 2006
51 Neolithic vases
5,000–3,000 BCE),
industrial paint
Variable dimensions

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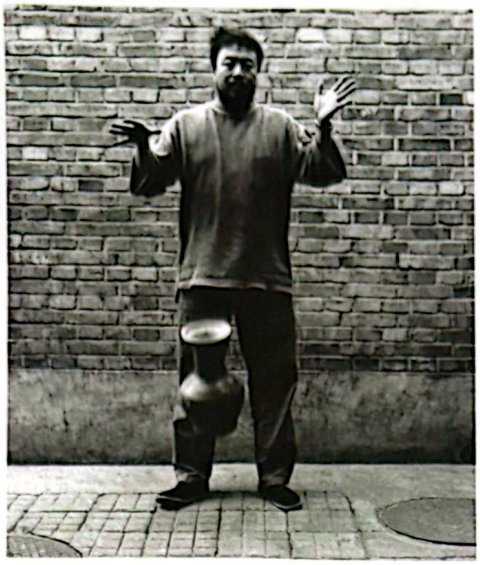





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Ghada Amer works in many different media ranging from fired ceramics and embroidered 'paintings' to stainless steel sculptures and garden installations of carnivorous plants. Best known for her erotically charged works, which often layer colourful abstractions over embroidered images of nude women masturbating or engaged in sexual activity, Amer is uncensored in her artistic depictions, which have bold feminist overtones.

Dividing her time since 1995 between New York and Paris, Amer is unabashedly at odds with aspects of her native culture. Her sexually and politically charged works resist the dominant cultural narrative that tells women that their sexuality is not their own, that they belong in the home, and that monogamous romantic love should be their guiding barometer.

Amer's lesbian couples and images of female masturbation are borrowed, often, from erotic magazines, but the artist re-contextualizes them in her works, taking them out of the line of the male-centred gaze and transforming them completely. Shifting contexts from one designed for men's sexual titillation into an ostensibly nonfunctional space that falls in line with the historical depiction of the nude throughout art history, the subjectivity of these figures shifts as well. In other works, Amer has included stencilled on lettering that spells out quotes from noted feminists, such as 'We are the granddaughters of the witches you could not burn' (*Sindy in Pink, RFGA*, 2015), and 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman' (*Rainbow Girl*, 2014).

Amer's ceramic works can be considered in two categories. The first is her slab-based works. These use a flat surface of clay as a canvas on which to depict sexual scenes that echo those found in her drawings, prints and paintings. Her female figures are rendered in colourful outlines over painterly patches of coloured glaze, and are often depicted on awkwardly shaped pieces with ragged edges, as if fragments from a larger, broken piece. The images are therefore imposed onto clay surfaces that one could imagine being discovered in an archaeological dig, making a link with the erotic appetites of the ancient Greeks, often alluded to in the scenes depicted on their own pots. In contrast, the second category sees more sculptural, tactile objects taking form, as if the artist has prodded, stretched, folded or knotted lumps of clay. Termed glaze-study works, an object such as *Yellow Strokes* (2015) is a canary yellow perforated piece of clay with textural, graceful sweeps and curves of matter; *The Black Knot* (2014), is smooth by comparison, with sumptuous, erotic folds in matt black.

In her series of works that share the title, *Paravent avec Amour* ('Screen with Love') (2015), the same image of two long-haired, closed-eyed women locked in a kiss overlays an abstracted background. The ceramic form itself stands on its end, creating the screen-like shape that informs the title ('paravent' being French for 'screen'), evoking some idea, as well, about the limits gone to and protections adopted against being seen.
• Jens Hoffmann

Ghada Amer Born 1963, Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2014 – 'Rainbow Girls', Cheim & Read, New York; 2012 – Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal; 2008 – 'Ghada Amer–Reza Farkhondeh: A New Collaboration on Paper', Singapore Tyler Institute, Malaysia; 'Love Has No End', Elisabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, New York; 2007 – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome; 2006 – Paintings and RFGA Drawings', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Entangled: threads and making', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; 2016 – 'In Context: Africans in America', Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg; Busan Biennale 2016, South Korea; 'The Female Gaze, Part Two: Women Look at Men', Cheim & Read, New York; 2015 – 'Le fil rouge', Espace Louis Vuitton, Munich; 2014 – 'Seeing Through Light, Selections from the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection', Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi; 'Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe', Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; 'The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory Revisited by Contemporary African Artists', Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt and touring to Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia; Smithsonian National Museum for African Art, Washington, DC.

Ghada Amer



↑ *Yellow Strokes*, 2015
Ceramic
22.9 × 23.5 × 17.8 cm
(9 × 9¼ × 7 in)

↗ *Standing Girl in Yellow*, 2015
Ceramic
121.9 × 58.4 × 33 cm
(48 × 23 × 13 in)

↗↗ *Entrelacement*, 2015
Ceramic
114.9 × 40.6 × 63.5 cm
(45¼ × 16 × 25 in)

→ *Thinking Twice*, 2015
Ceramic
66 × 55.9 × 40.6 cm
(26 × 22 × 16 in)

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Aaron Angell's work encourages radical new ways of thinking about pottery and the divide between art and craft. Acknowledging that ceramics and sculpture have historically had a disjointed relationship, he is compelled by a desire to redress the marginal status of clay within sculptural practice. Employing a deliberately naive style, Angell crams his tabletop ceramics with a slew of esoteric references that seem at once familiar yet obscure. In Angell's hands concerns ranging from ancient rituals and hobbyist cultures to folk music, cult films, rural crafts and bad studio pottery fuse together in fantastical dioramas. Early works such as *Carnaby Street* (2011) – an agglomeration of fungal forms decorated with an array of coloured glazes – resemble eccentric desk tidies or ornamental ashtrays but these, as with all of Angell's output, are resolutely nonfunctional. Recent pieces are more refined though no less enigmatic. Take, for instance, the highly stylized, representational tableaux 'Molybdenum Bell Courtyards' series and *Pink Bird* (both 2015) that appear to illustrate episodes from an ancient fairy tale known only to the artist.

Angell, who trained as a sculptor, initially turned to ceramics in order to make maquettes for larger three-dimensional work. Attracted to clay's primal and protean qualities, he soon recognized its potential as a medium in its own right. Desiring to facilitate others, in 2014 he founded the London-based Troy Town Art Pottery, a radical ceramics studio for artists wanting to explore clay as a sculptural medium. It provides access to specialist equipment and knowledge that has long been the preserve of the craft world. As with Angell's own work, it seeks to consolidate the position of ceramics within the field of contemporary art. To that end, it eschews functional wares and traditional approaches, favouring instead experimental work that seeks to liberate ceramics from the craft paradigm. Gallery Peacetime, an exhibition space at the Pottery housed inside an aquarium, exemplifies this. The tank is home to Angell's three axolotl salamanders, and artists working at Troy Town are regularly invited to create subaquatic environments for the unusual amphibians.

Despite being an avowed advocate of ceramics and having invested much time and energy in raising awareness of the medium's possibilities, Angell does not label himself a ceramicist. Indeed, his wider practice includes painting and wall drawings and he often downplays the fact that his sculptures use clay, so as to disassociate them from the history of traditional ceramics. Nevertheless, certain sculptures do speak to that history. *Bottle Kiln – Gymnosperm* (2015) and *Bottle Kiln – Receiver* (2015), for instance, both reference the large distinctive ovens of the Staffordshire potteries that were a typical sight in the industrial landscape of Stoke-on-Trent from the eighteenth century until the 1960s. Yet Angell subverts these forms with sprouting vegetation or the addition of a telephone receiver, introducing a surreal dimension to the viewing experience. Works such as these underscore the tantalizing question at the heart of Angell's practice: how to celebrate the ceramic process while simultaneously disassociating it from its utilitarian and decorative ornamental past. • David Trigg

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Aaron Angell Born 1987, Kent, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany; 2017 – GOMA, Glasgow; Artist in Residence, Tate St Ives, Cornwall; 2016 – 'The Death of Robin Hood', Glasgow Botanic Gardens and Kelvingrove Museum for Glasgow International; 'Variations on the Chaldon Doom', Markus Lüttgen, Cologne, Germany; 2015 – 'Grotwork', Studio Voltaire, London; 2014–ongoing – 'Troy Town Art Pottery, A radical and psychedelic ceramic workshop for artists', Hoxton Street, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'That Continuous Thing – Artists and the Ceramic Studio 1920–Today', Tate St Ives, Cornwall, UK; 2016 – 'British Art Show 8', Leeds Art Galley and then touring nationally; 2014 – 'Pool: Kunst aus London, Aaron Angell, Jack Bilbo, Alice Channer, Nicolas Deshayes, Cally Spooner, Magali Reus', Gallery Peacetime, Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover, Germany; 2013 – 'British British Polish Polish: Art from Europe's edges in the long 1990s and today', CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw.





Aaron Angell

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← *Bottle Kiln – Receiver*, 2015
Glazed stoneware
30 × 30 × 52 cm
(11¾ × 11¾ × 20½ in)

↓ *Bottle Kiln – Gymnosperm*, 2015
Glazed stoneware
32 × 32 × 45 cm
(12¼ × 12½ × 17¾ in)

→ *Pink Bird*, 2015
Glazed stoneware
48 × 46 × 29.5 cm
(18¾ × 18½ × 11¾ in)

↘ From 'Molybdenum Bell Courtyards' series, 2015
Lead-glazed earthenware and glazed stoneware
39 × 39 × 11 cm
(15¼ × 15½ × 4¼ in)





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Time is embedded deep within the work of Salvatore Arancio. From the close observation of geological and vegetal phenomena to the combination of methods of image production that were invented hundreds of years apart, his work finds ways of making us wonder about our ancestors' (and our own) explanations about how the world came to be, and how to best represent it.

Arancio works across different media, as well as ceramics, and often weaves his narratives together using a number of materials. Having studied photography, his earliest works were two-dimensional collages that combined his own drawings, geometric shapes and found images with antique etchings of volcanic landscapes, employing the old-fashioned technique of photo-etching to create the final – distinctly uncanny – images. He has described them, in an interview for *Aesthetica* in 2013, as intentionally atemporal: 'I want them to have an ambiguous temporality almost equidistant between an end and a beginning – images that might be pre-human, or have an apocalyptic quality.'

Such hybrid images, and their resistance to being located in time or space, have been brought into three dimensions by Arancio's decision to start working with clay. Formed by extremely slow geological processes, the connection between this material and the transformative properties of the volcanoes in Arancio's earlier pieces is not lost in his ceramic works. His engagement with ceramics has manifested itself as so many protrusions and extrusions, puddles, stalagmites and lava, to which have been added single or multiple uncanny elements. *BF 37 Twisted Lava* (2013) recalls the historical tradition of collecting and displaying objects from the natural world, and within its case the surface of this glazed ceramic seems to bristle with moss or lichen; *Puna* (2013) has been sprayed with saccharine pastel colours that can only be synthetic, regardless of how apparently natural a form they cover.

These colours, according to Arancio, prompted him to 'think about the hallucinatory rituals that take place around certain natural settings'. The myth and the ritual, both of which accumulate cultural power over time as they are passed on through generations, are hinted at throughout his work. *Fashioned to a Device behind a Tree*, the outcome of a ceramics fellowship at Camden Arts Centre in 2015, incorporated a garden of strange objects that seemed to be both recognizable and utterly alien, with performances that interacted with them. *And These Crystals Are Just Like Globes of Light* (2016), in which over thirty ceramic objects seemingly emerge from pools of black liquid on the floor, prompts in us the reflection that some of the best science fiction comes from the edges of our understanding of nature. • Rebecca Lewin

Salvatore Arancio Born 1974 Catania, Italy. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Travelling Circular Labyrinths', Museo Civico di Castelbuono, Palermo, Italy; 'The Water They Dwell In', Quartz Studio, Turin, Italy; 'Oh Mexico!', Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland; 2015 – 'Fashioned to a Device Behind a Tree', Camden Arts Centre, London; 'Une Taxonomie des Sens et des Formes', Centre d'art contemporain La Halle des bouchers, Vienne, France; 'Project 09: Salvatore Arancio', Contemporary Art Society, London; 2014 – 'The Hidden', Ensapc Ygrec, Paris; 'Cathedral', AV Festival, Northern Gallery For Contemporary Art, Sunderland, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Evolutionary Travels', Fundacion Arte, Buenos Aires; 'Inland Far', Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury, UK; 'Things Themselves: The Causality of Matter', Vernon Gardens, Vernon, Los Angeles; 'Teleonomy', Cafè Oto, London; 'The First Humans', Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth, UK; 'Terra Provocata', Fondazione del Monte di Bologna e di Ravenna e Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna, Italy; 2015 – 'The London Open 2015', Whitechapel Gallery, London; 'Inner Landscapes Of Time', Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam.

alvatore Arancio



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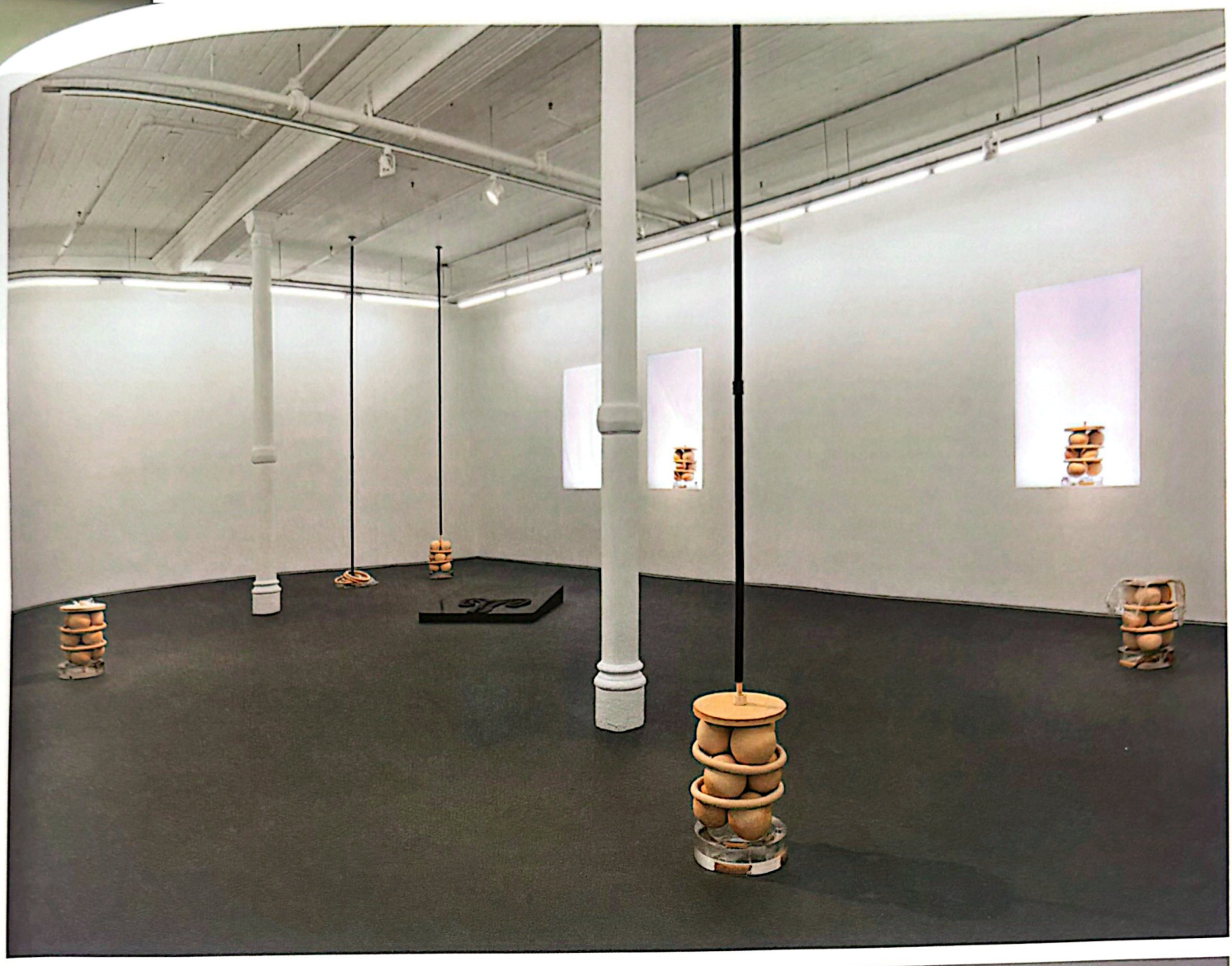

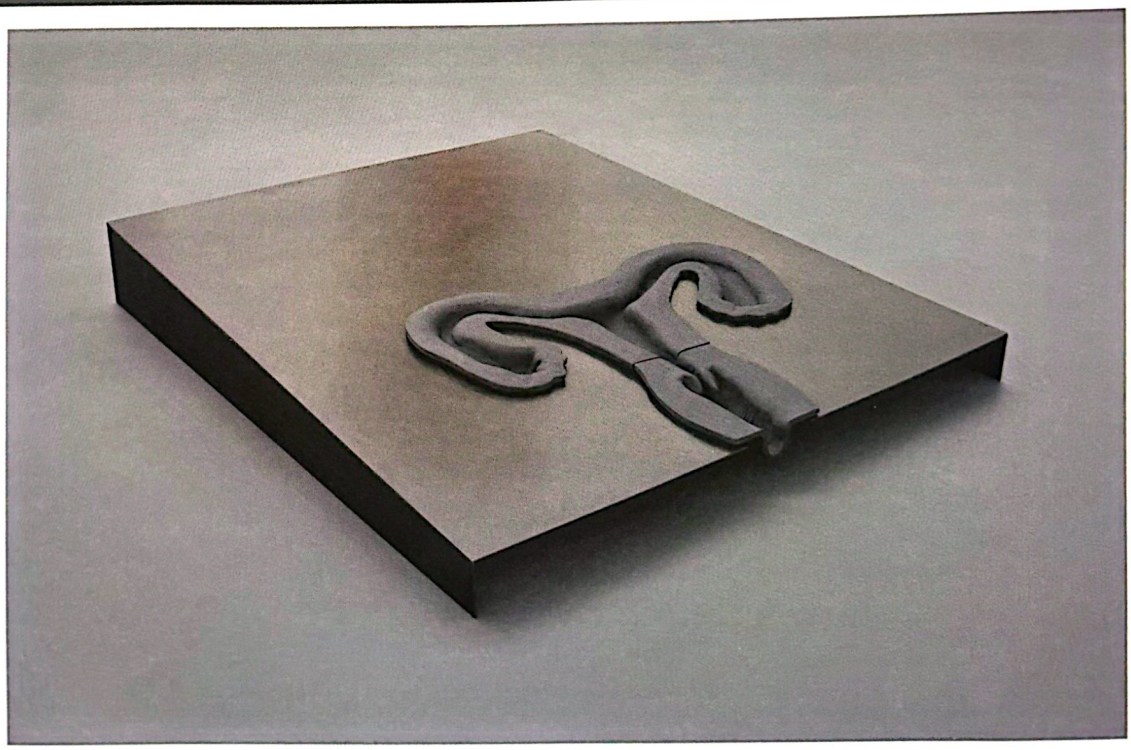

↖ *Porous Solutions*, 2013
Ceramic, custom webbing, hardware, gelled emollient, Mylar, archival pigment inks on silk, magnets, bent steel
127 × 38.1 × 50.8 cm
(50 × 15 × 20 in)

← *Leakage Industries: Clear Conduit*, 2012
Gelled emollient, unglazed ceramic, usb cable with gender changers, flash drive, hardware
101.6 × 81.3 × 121.9 cm
(40 × 32 × 48 in)

↑ Installation view, 'Conflict (process)' exhibition, 47 Canal, New York, 2015

→ *Process*, 2015
Sheet steel, ceramic
15.2 × 101.6 × 121.9 cm
(6 × 40 × 48 in)

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A beach's rocky outcrop, the white cube of a gallery, an urban park, or the British Museum's ancient sculpture galleries would all seem equally probable places to find Huma Bhabha's mixed media sculptures. Informed in equal measure by her Pakistani heritage, ancient ruins, contemporary science fiction and the history of sculpture, her work appeals to a shared experience of the human form that transcends singular national or temporal ascription. To create her primarily figurative objects, Bhabha works outwards from a structural core, adding such materials as clay to substrates often made from Styrofoam or chicken wire.

Though she had exhibited sculpture since 1993, Bhabha only began experimenting with clay in 2001. On a trip to Mexico that year with fellow artists, among them her husband Jason Fox, Bhabha picked up some clay and shaped it into a foot. Working on a table in her studio back in New York, she sculpted the outstretched hands of a prostrate clay figure whose torso she had covered in black plastic, intending to prevent premature drying. Recognizing that the plastic functioned as a formal element itself, while also connoting a range of timely and varied references – a shroud, rubbish and a memorial to victims of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars – she retained it, and later made two additional versions of the piece (*Untitled*, 2002, 2005, 2006).

If Bhabha's prostrate figure hewed to horizontality, *Sleeper* (2005), her first clay-covered standing work, achieved stately and resolute verticality through an internal armature of wire mesh, wood and blue Styrofoam strips doubling as ribs. Exploiting the key Minimalist tenet that circumnavigating an artwork in the act of viewing offers up crucial information about its spatial coordinates (she has called this gradual unfolding 'cinematic'), Bhabha caked clay heavily on *Sleeper*'s front but left his back exposed, revealing a vacant core. With this work, Bhabha applied clay late in the process of fabrication, as an outermost layer. In tones ranging from ochre to burnt sienna, clay functions as skin, and, as such, acts as the life-giving force for these multiracial beings.

Bhabha's persistent portrayal of feet calls to mind a Biblical passage in which the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar dreams of an enormous statue comprised of four metals, each representing its own kingdom, but with feet formed of clay. The story secures a link in her practice between land as landscape, and land as clay, so that one becomes synonymous with the other. Rectangular pedestals often ground her upright figures, placing her work within a long lineage of commemorative statuary, as in *Millenniumistic* (2012), a figure crowned by a white arc reminiscent of the Egyptian god Thoth. But, for Bhabha, 'landscape functions as a pedestal', a recalibration implying that any object might count as sculpture, as seems to be the case in *Road to Balkh* (2012). Here, clay signifies itself: a lumpy passage of grey terrain cradles a snaking, rippling length of discarded tire sourced from a recycling plant near Bhabha's Poughkeepsie studio. A road, perhaps, to a land unburdened by geography or time.
• Elizabeth Buhe





Huma Bhabha Born 1962, Karachi, Pakistan. Lives and works in Poughkeepsie, NY. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Study #16. What is Love', David Roberts Art Foundation, London; 2016 – 'Huma Bhabha', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; 2015 – 'Huma Bhabha', Salon 94 Bowery, New York; 'Wages of Fear', C L E A R I N G, Brussels; 'Stranger', MOCA Cleveland, Ohio; 2014 – 'Huma Bhabha', VeneKlasen/Werner, Berlin; 2013 – 'Huma Bhabha: Unnatural Histories', MoMA PSI, New York; 2012 – 'Huma Bhabha: Players', Maramotti Collection, Reggio Emilia Province, Italy; 2011 – Aspen Art Museum, Colorado. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Sculpture in the City', London, UK; 'Beyond the Veil: Works from the Permanent Collection', The Bronx Museum of Art, New York; 2015 – 'All the World's Futures', '56th Venice Biennale; 'Greater New York', MoMA PS1; 'America is Hard to See', Whitney Museum of Art, New York; 'Stranger', MOCA Cleveland, Ohio; 2014 – 'The Human Factor', Hayward Gallery, London.

Huma Bhabha

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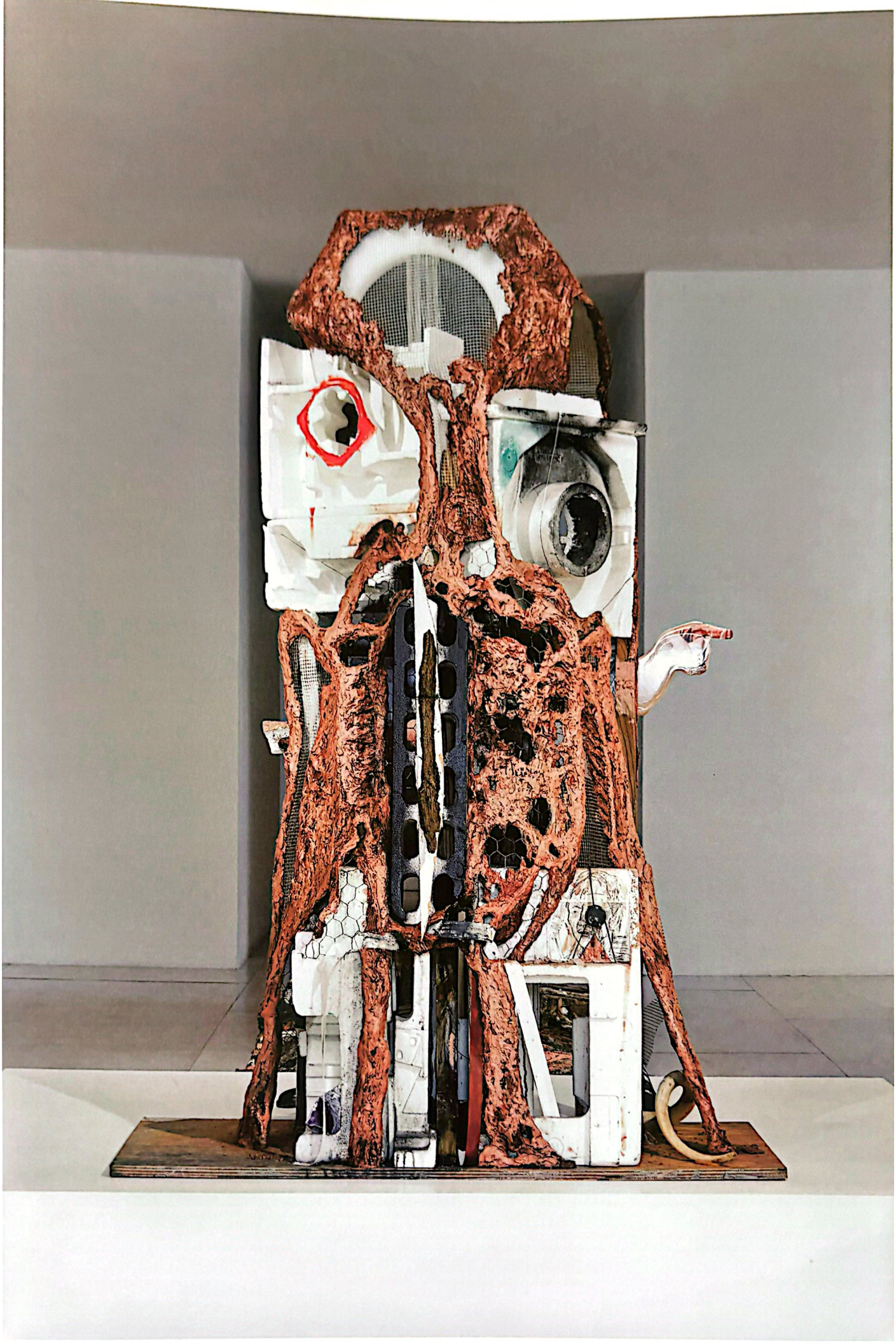

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The human figure is the bedrock of Shary Boyle's often fantastical and transgressive artistic practice. Proficient across a range of media, including drawing, painting, performance and sculpture, Boyle came to international prominence in 2013 when she represented Canada at the 55th Venice Biennale. Her multimedia presentation in Venice's Giardini, titled *Music for Silence* (2013), included virtuoso porcelain depictions of stooped female figures bearing colossal loads on their backs. In interviews Boyle emphasized that she was a figurative artist interested in narrative, and that her sculptural pieces are, importantly, handmade. 'The hand and the idea are absolutely integrated in my work, and that's where the power comes out of it,' she told critic Coline Milliard. 'Every piece of work of mine that you see is me.'

Boyle lives and works in Toronto, a city widely known for its male-dominated school of conceptual photography. Tellingly, her emergence in 2013 coincided with curator Massimiliano Gioni's main exhibition at Venice that year, which drew attention to an outlier class of global artists whose enigmatic practices are often couched in figurative terms. Boyle accepts that her preoccupation with rendering the human figure by hand in a traditional medium like porcelain is at odds with conceptual practices that rely heavily on the armature of written statements. But, as she explained to author Christine Pountney in 2013, her myth-infused work is compelled by an earnest ambition to transcend language. 'It's the earnestness that makes people uncomfortable,' added Boyle, not the vulnerability her work portrays.

Boyle started making sculpture in the late 1990s and, out of frustration with existing materials, turned to porcelain. She was attracted to the material for its elegance and historical traditions; its modest scale was another plus point. 'Space, and how we occupy it, is a political as well as a practical concern,' she explained in a speech at Calgary's Esker Foundation in 2017. 'I wish to make small sculptures, slowly, with great care.' Her output includes a series of Royal Doulton-quoting porcelain figures from 2005–6. Measuring about twenty-five centimetres (ten inches) high, these delicate pieces are at once flagrant and sensitive in their elaboration of Boyle's feminist concerns. Boyle rejects inferences of grotesquery in her work, arguing that her interest resides in exaggeration and excess.

Her output has been likened to Hieronymus Bosch and Henry Darger. While Boyle has quoted Francisco Goya in a work, her reference points range from punk pamphleteer and Toronto queercore musician G.B.Jones to European fairy tales and, more recently, aspects of Canadian folklore. *Greek Tragedy* (2016) and *Facing Forward* (2016) were made in collaboration with, respectively, Inuit ceramicists John Kurok and Pierre Aupilardjuk. Boyle has also made porcelain works referencing drawings by Shuvinai Ashoona, a member of a renowned Inuit artist family. In her speech at the Esker Foundation, Boyle described her collaborative pieces as 'bridge art', in that they span between things and 'people, animals, space and the earth ... It is art to communicate, through symbols, myths, dreams and hybrids.' • Sean O'Toole

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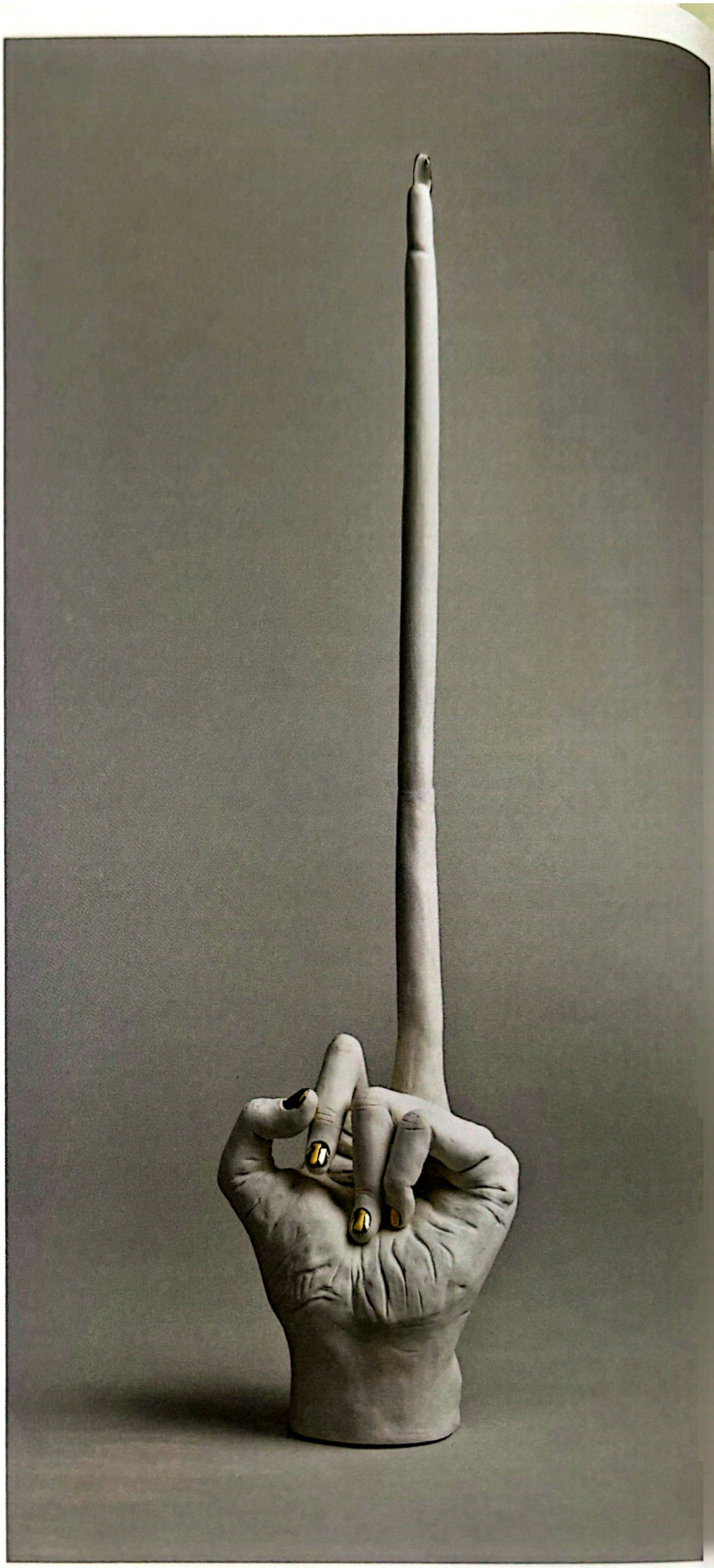
Shary Boyle Born 1972, Scarborough, Ontario. Lives and works in Toronto. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Story Telling Life', Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale, South Korea; 'Customs', Suzanne Bierderberg Gallery, Amsterdam; 2015 – 'Universal Cobra', Pierre-Francois Ouellette Contemporain, Montreal; 2013 – 'Music for Silence', Canada Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; 2012 – 'Buttermint Equilux', Louis Vuitton Maison, Toronto; 2011 – 'The Illuminations Project', ICA, Philadelphia; 2010 – 'Flesh and Blood', Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and touring to Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal; and Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; 2009 – 'Moon Hunter', Fumetto Festival, Lucerne, Switzerland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Earthlings', The Esker Foundation, Calgary, Canada; 2016 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2015 – 'LOUD silence', gallery@calit2, University of California San Diego; 2014 – 'Shine a Light: Canadian Biennial 2014', National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; 2012 – 'L'Espace des metamorphoses', L'Observatoire de l'Espace du CNES, Vallauris, France.



Shary Boyle

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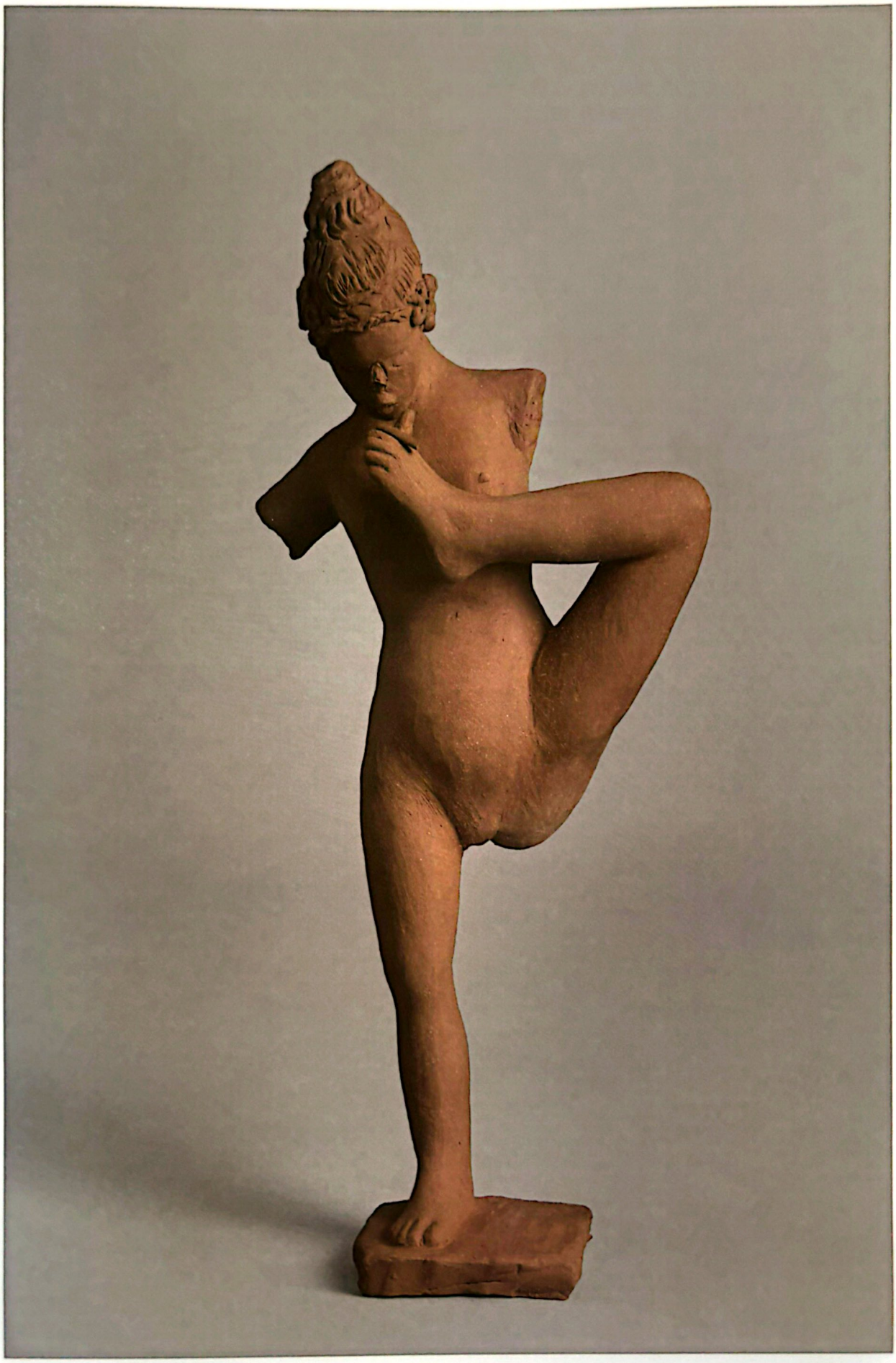

- *Bless You*, 2014
  Porcelain, gold luster
  55 × 14 × 12 cm
  (21⅝ × 5½ × 4¾ in)

- *Europe's Little Death*, 2016
  Terracotta
  16 × 12 × 7 cm
  (6¼ × 4¾ × 2¾ in)

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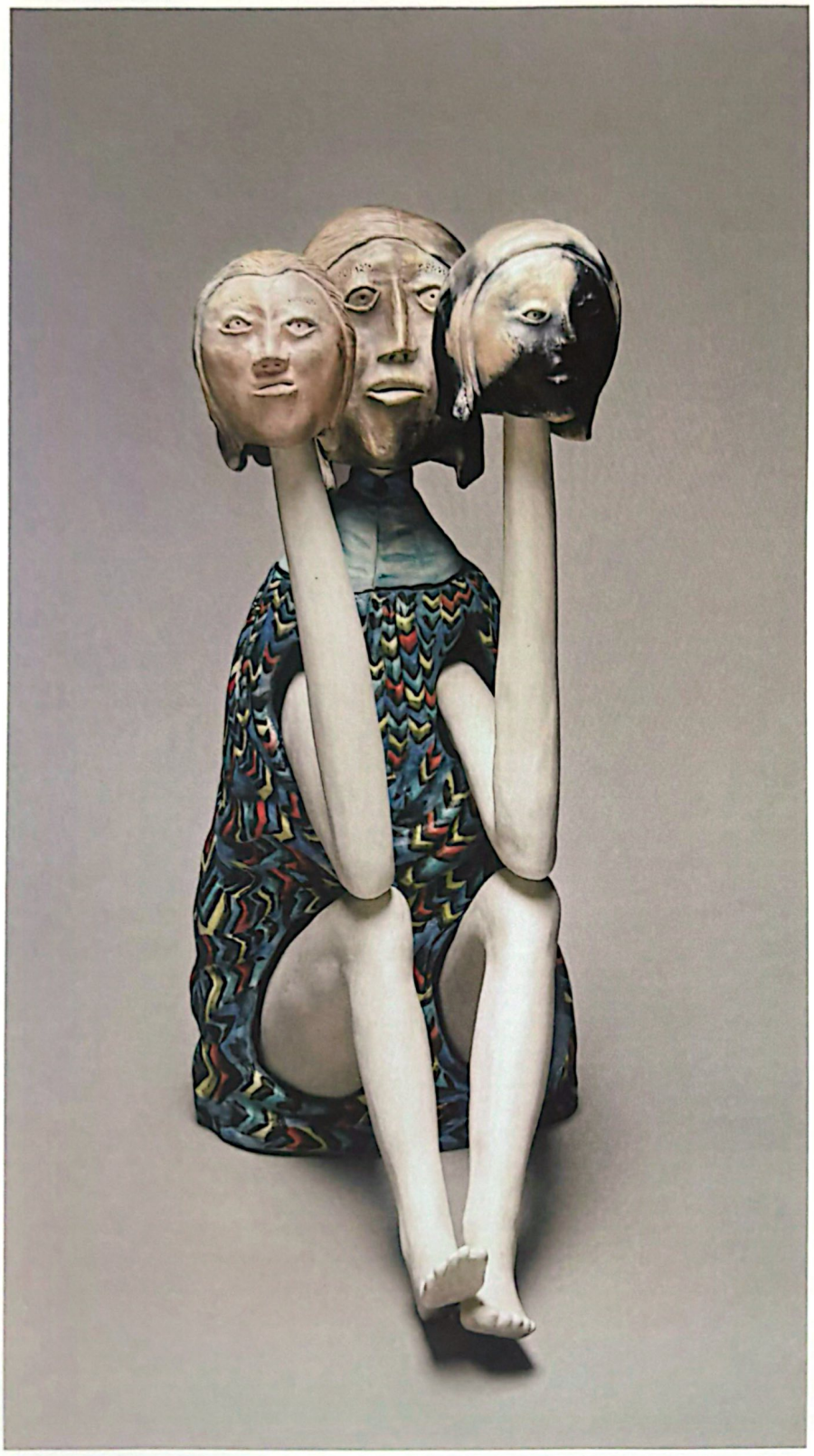

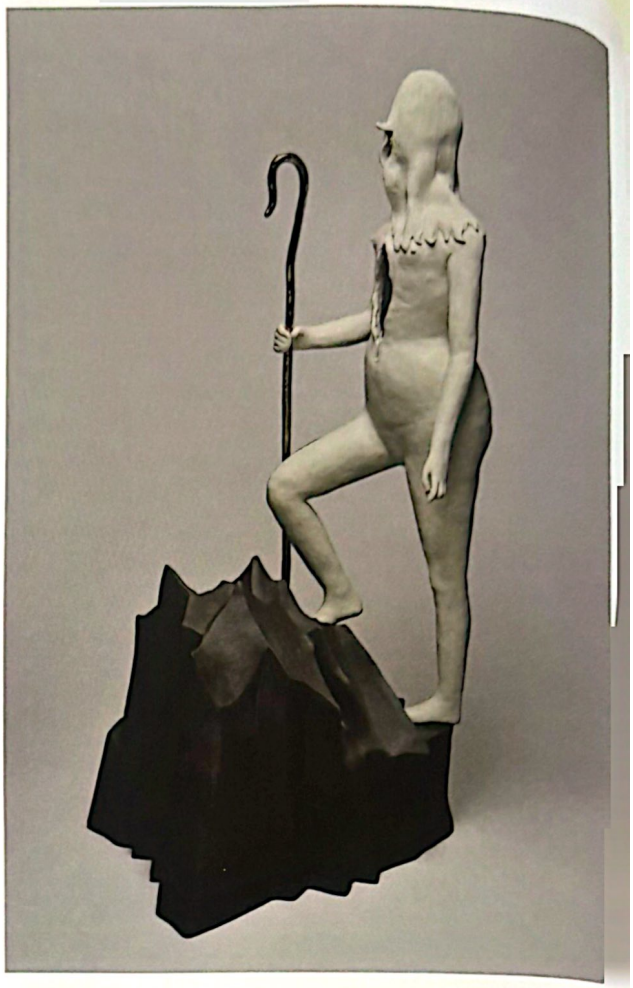



↑ With Pierre Aupilardjuk, *Facing Forward*, 2016
Porcelain and smoke-fired stoneware
34 × 18 × 28 cm
(13 ⅜ × 7 ⅛ × 11 in)

↗ *The Shepherd*, 2016
Porcelain, stoneware, bronze
62 × 28 × 34 cm
(24 ½ × 11 × 13 ⅜ in)

→ *The Reader*, 2016
Porcelain, gold leaf
46 × 25 × 25 cm
(18 ⅛ × 9 ⅞ × 9 ⅞ in)

→→ *Greek Tragedy*, 2016
Porcelain sculpture by Shary Boyle, smoke-fired stoneware mask by John Kurok
54 × 24 × 30 cm
(21 ¼ × 9 ½ × 12 ¾ in)

ary Boyle

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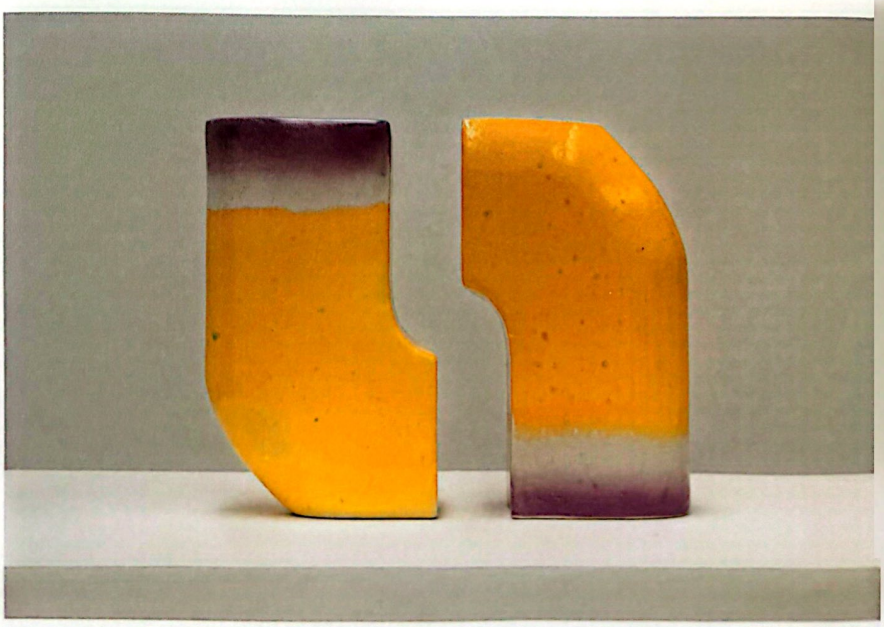
Trained as a painter, Pia Camil's ceramics fit seamlessly into – and are often shown in combination with – a wider practice which offers a critique of modernist and capitalist norms. Camil has said she likes the slowness of individual ceramic production as counter to the speed of mass production, but also for the painterly opportunity to explore colour that it provides. Her appealing and visibly handmade vases in unusually inventive shapes also turn out to carry an echo of bankruptcy, as the forms are derived from her *Espectaculares* (2012–ongoing) – abstract paintings and curtains derived from Mexican roadside advertising hoardings ('espectaculares' in Spanish neatly echoing Guy Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle'). Camil appropriates the appearance of billboards that have fallen out of use, typically because the advertiser hasn't paid: the owners then scramble the panels by way of cancellation. Her 'Fragmento' series (2014) of ceramics transposes excerpts from the same signs and symbols into the domestic sphere.

The installation *Skins* (2015) presented textiles and enamelled ceramic masks on plywood slat panelling typical of Mexican dollar stores, but configured to mimic – as if devaluing – Frank Stella's seminal stripe paintings. The *Bust Masks* displayed on the panels merged body-shaped jewellery display stands with primitive faces. Standing like totems on maple pedestals, they peopled the scene, suggesting both a commonality of rituals and the deceptive fronts often put on by us, their flesh and blood viewers.

Camil's broader practice ranges from painting to textiles and performance; for example, her *Highway Follies* (2011) are shaped canvases based on the sections of wall from abandoned semi-built houses: modernist forms are infected with the would-be house builders' failures. For *Wearing Watching* (2015), she made 800 colourful ponchos out of misprinted – and therefore discarded – fabric, and gave them to fairgoers at Frieze New York, who were delighted to parade in materials they'd have had no time for before Camil's repurposing. *A Pot for a Latch* (2016) encouraged viewers to exchange their own personal items for elements from a shop-like installation, allowing financially advantageous transactions on the grounds that 'personal history and significance' was the relevant value, rather than money.

Camil's works, then, can be read as sallies against the way in which capitalist societies corral transactions into a narrow funnel of value. And yet, with her zestful use of tropical colour adding to the feel-good factor her projects generate, Camil gives the impression of playing a game rather than taking on an enemy. This upbeat use of failure as a trigger for creation might be seen as a contemporary take on the *Vanitas* theme. Where that pointed to the need to reconcile ourselves to the transience of all things rather than struggle against it, Camil points to how the systems of capitalism – including its art – break down, but then moves on to make the most of them nevertheless. • Paul Carey-Kent





a Camil Born 1980, Mexico City. Lives and works in exico City. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Slats, ins and Shopfittings', Blum & Poe, New York; 'A Pot for atch', New Museum, New York; 'Skins', Contemporary s Center, Cincinnati, OH; 2014 – 'The Little Dog ughed', Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; 'Entrecortinas: abre, , corre', Galería OMR, Mexico City; 2013 – 'Espectacular ón', Galerie Sultana, Paris; Selected Group Exhibitions: 6 – 'TXT', Instituto de Visión, Bogotá, Colombia; 'Here I Now at Museum Ludwig: Home Visit, Museum Ludwig', ogne, Germany; 'United States of Latin America', eum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI; 2015 Camil, Pablo Helguera, Pedro Reyes', Middlesbrough itute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, UK; 2013 – 'No io A', La Casa Encendida, Madrid.

Camil

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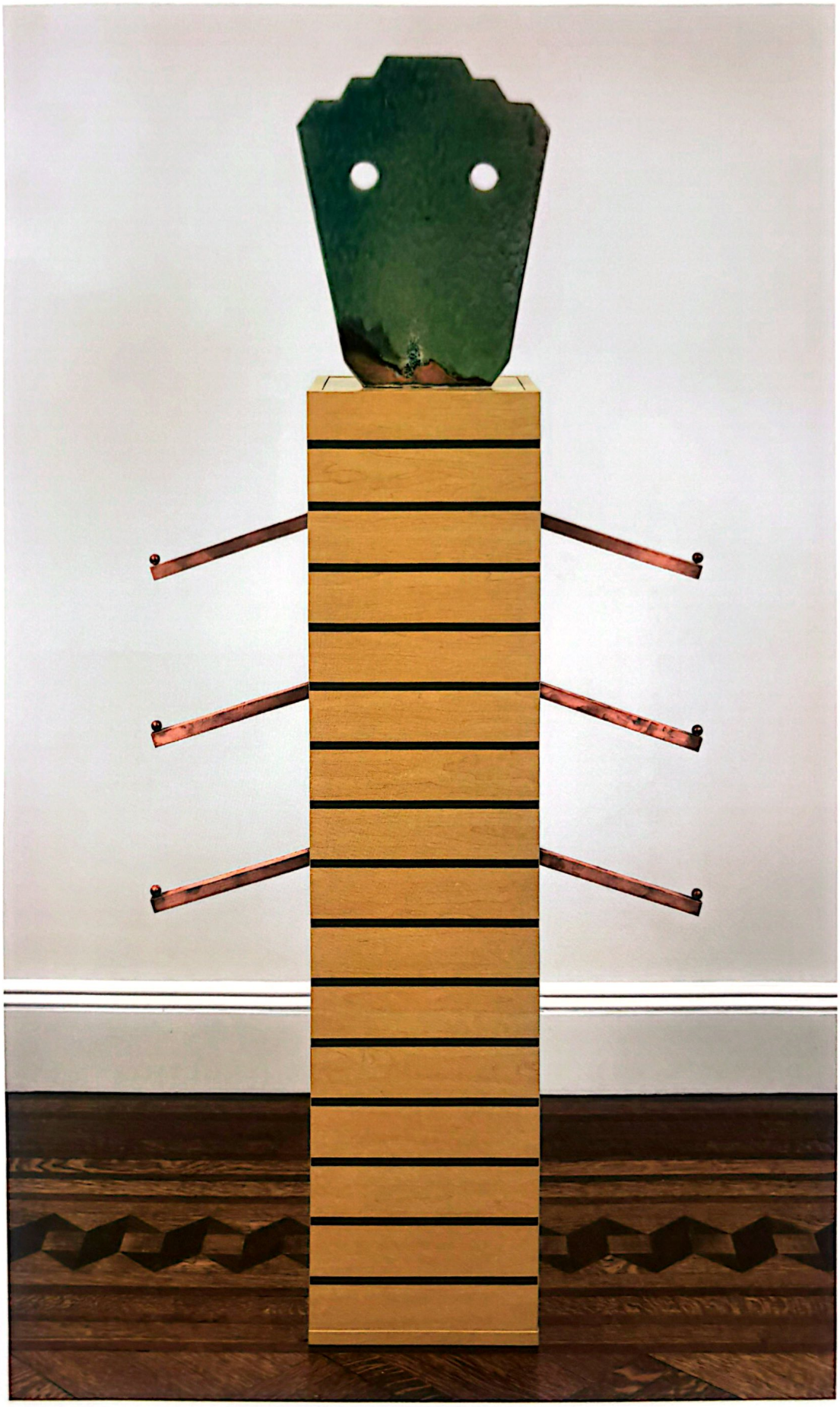
← *Fragmento 0*, 2014
Enamelled low-temperature ceramic
Two parts: 70.2 × 24.8 × 14 cm (27 ¾ × 9 ¾ × 5 ½ in) and 9.5 × 20.3 × 15.2 cm 3 ¾ × 8 × 6 in
Installed: 70.2 × 29.8 × 15.2 cm (27 ⅝ × 11 ¾ × 6 in)

← *Fragmento 6 I and 6 II*, 2014
Enamelled low-temperature ceramic
Two parts: 40 × 25.4 × 14 cm (15 ¾ × 10 × 5 ½ in) and 40.6 × 25.4 × 14 cm (16 × 10 × 5 ½ in)
Installed: 40.6 × 58.4 × 14 cm (16 × 23 × 5 ½ in)

→ *Bust Mask Accessory (Turquoise)*, 2016
Enamelled ceramic, maple pedestal, copper accessories
Ceramic: 43.2 × 1.9 × 6.4 cm (17 × ¾ × 2 ½ in)
Overall: 165.1 × 76.2 × 30.5 cm (65 × 30 × 12 in)



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↑ Installation view, '500' exhibition, Perez Miami Art Museum, 2014–15

↓ *STELLA*, 2016
Earthenware, terracotta, glaze, magic sculpt, pc-11, ink, kiln furniture
174 × 45.72 × 50.8 cm
(68 ½ × 18 × 20 in)



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Sculptural forms, performance and the body define Marco Chiandetti's practice. Architecture is significant for his work, with wooden and metal structures a recurring motif. He is a 'post-medium' artist, but since 2010 his art has been increasingly bound up with clay and casting processes, providing a coherent framework and bringing him critical attention.

His sculptural work embraces both abstraction and figuration: *Untitled Aluminium Sculptures* (2012) comprises abstract cast aluminium forms that reveal the imprints, indents and impressions of the artist's hands – fingers, palms, knuckles and wrists leaving their traces through myriad gestures of kneading, pressing, pulling, rolling and folding. Sidestepping this work's monumentality, the ceramic series of 'Pink Sculptures' (2013) are seemingly floppy, glistening, intestine-like vessels bunched up, squeezed and folded over. Photographs documenting the finished works feature hands restaging key moments in their making – a fist clenched around one, a finger poking through another.

The series 'Black Sculptures' (2013) is pared down further still, the forms becoming more literal manifestations of the physical gestures involved in their creation. Given Chiandetti's performative bent, it was a natural step to employ other body parts. In 'Untitled (Bricks and Tiles)' (2014), he pressed his forearms into a block of clay, which was subsequently fired, leaving their indent and the attendant fissures as the work's poetic and almost minimalist *raison d'être*.

Chiandetti approached the corporeal from a more oblique angle in *Bullet Holes – A Measure of Kinetic Energy (AK47)* (2014), hiring an ex-policeman to fire rounds from an AK47 semi-automatic rifle into large blocks of clay, before casting the aftermath of decimated cavities in bronze. The results are both beautiful and horrific. A calmer approach followed in his 2015 series 'Sculptures for Birds', ceramic stands on which birds of prey and exotic birds can perch. Showcasing various casting and glazing techniques from underglaze washes to high-gloss finishes, the forms are ambiguously organic abstractions, though the birds that modelled the finished pieces seemed happy to use them as intended.

These were followed, in the spring of 2016, by a commission for the 20th Biennale of Sydney. A mixed-media installation uniting performance, architecture, the human body and sculptural casting processes, *The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?*, comprised three aviary structures. Inside, the artist placed cast body parts made of birdseed on which mynah birds would feast. Unpopular in Australia due to being a non-native and invasive species, Chiandetti chose the mynahs as a means of provoking discussion about displacement, migration and immigration. As a site-specific work for Sydney's Mortuary Station – a former railway used for transporting the dead – the project drew a poignant connection to the notion of birds as carriers of human spirits into the afterlife, or as signifiers of death. When the birds pecked at the sculptures, the seeds would drop onto the floor, as if ready to grow again – the cycle of life played out through imagery of the dead and decaying human body.
• Matthew Price





Marco Chiandetti Born 1973, London. Lives and works in London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Future is Already Here....it's just not evenly distributed', 20th Biennale of Sydney; 2015 – 'Drawing Biennale', The Drawing Room, London; 2014 – 'Working Title', Goodman Gallery, Cape Town; 'Puerto Paraiso', Red Departamental de Artes Plásticas, Medellin, Colombia; 'The Campos de Gutiérrez Archive Travels to Norte de Santander', La Bagatela Museum, Colombia; 2012 – 'Rudolph Polanszky and Marco Chiandetti', Ancient and Modern, London; 'Figure and Ground', Utopian Stumps, Melbourne, Australia; 2011 – 'Rock the Casbah', Swiss Institute of Rome.

Marco Chiandetti

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← *Perch (with Eclectus Parrot)*, 2015
Glazed ceramic, Eclectus parrot
23 × 12 × 9 cm
(9 × 4¾ × 3½ in)

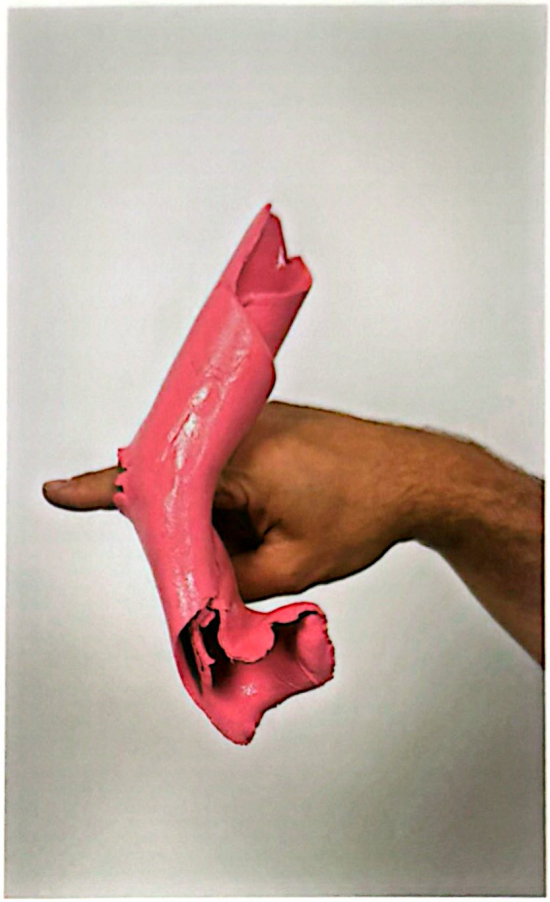
↓ *Untitled (with brick)*, 2014
Unglazed ceramic, concrete
28 × 18 × 23
(11 × 7 × 9 in)

→ *Untitled handheld sculpture I (pink)*, 2014
Ceramic, enamel
24 × 18 × 14 cm
(9⅜ × 7 × 5½ in)

→→ *Untitled handheld sculpture II (pink)*, 2014
Ceramic, enamel
19 × 8 × 7 cm
(7½ × 3 × 2¾ in)

↘ *Brick (Medellín)*, 2014
Unglazed ceramic
20 × 40 × 12 cm
(7¾ × 15¾ × 4¾ in)







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William Cobbing's performances and videos use clay in its basic form: wet, slippery and malleable. *The Kiss* (2004) was the first of these works to leave its mark on my memory. Here, the artist and his collaborator's heads are covered in a mass of suffocating clay, as they mould it in a mode of self-exploration that quickly turns into a noisy, dirty, erotic embrace. The separation between the 'heads' is lost as they merge into one object-being – hinting at the mythical history of clay and the sixteenth-century legend of the Golem – a nightmarish clay creature given life by a single word. The sound of strained breath, plus the obvious weight of the clay, creates an increasingly frantic, climactic (maybe orgasmic), slapstick feel.

The work *Re-Make, Re-Model* (2015) saw Cobbing suspending a mass of oil-clay from a tree in the garden of the École Française d'Athènes (The French School, Athens). Casts of human hands appeared from the indistinct mass, seeming to (re)form the very substance from which they emerge. The artist-made oil-clay never solidifies and the sculpture appeared to be trapped in a state of perpetual incompletion.

Palimpsest (2014), a performance at the Hayward Gallery's Dan Graham Pavilion, used trays of wet clay as writing tablets, and a similar performance later took place at London's Café Oto. Facing away from the audience, the action was broadcast live on adjacent TVs. Viewers witnessed a disjointed, somewhat playful argument between Cobbing and his co-performer (Beth Collar), written as short texts that were repeatedly scrawled on the clay and wiped away. The title suggests the over-layering of words to disguise or obfuscate meaning. The words written during this performance have been erased but still leave a trace, like a ghost image that fades but is not entirely lost in the clay; a metaphor for the way hasty, cruel words spoken during a lover's tiff can cut deep, or for the transience of some arguments that break down into laughter at the ridiculousness of what has been said.

The relationship between the written word and the materiality of clay is central to Cobbing's work. In *Transactions of the Duddo Field Club* (2014), he created a series of ceramic monoliths based on an early Bronze Age stone circle. Formed of clay moulded around a wooden armature, his simulacra are subtly different yet still carry the feel of the original stones. After firing, Cobbing embedded in them a random selection of charity shop books, spines outward. This work hints at King Arthur and the legend of the Sword in the Stone. Arthur's sword Excalibur bestowed power and authority on the King; Cobbing too promises to bestow power in the form of knowledge, yet it is frustratingly sealed in an inaccessible library.

Cobbing's work to date has been primarily an exploration of the high ideals of intellect, language and human interactions. Yet the materiality of his chosen medium of clay reminds us that we cannot disregard, deny or escape the physical reality of the world in which we exist. We are still connected to the earth, and the clay beneath our feet, in the most fundamental way. • Adrian George

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William Cobbing Born 1974, London. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Ceramic public sculpture commission', Westgate Oxford, UK; 2016 – Imprints', PrintRoom, Rotterdam, Netherlands; 2015 – Terrapolis: NEON & Whitechapel Gallery', École Française d'Athènes, Athens; 'What Are Words Worth?', Kammer Klang at Café OTO, London; 2014 – 'Transactions of the Duddo Field Club', Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, and touring to mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK; 2011 – More Soup and Tart', Barbican Centre, London; 2010 – 'Man in The Planet', Viafarini DOCVA, Milan. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – The Treachery of Objects', Fine Arts Center Gallery, Arkansas; 2014 – 'To Continue / Notes towards a Sculpture Cycle', NOMAS Foundation, Rome; 'What's Love Got To Do With It', Hayward Gallery Project Space, London; 2013 – 'The Drawing Biennial', The Drawing Room, London; 'Introspection', Yarat, Baku, Azerbaijan; 2012 – 'Revolver 3', Matt's Gallery, London; 2011 – 'RAAK / Touch', Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium; 2010 – 'Body Gestures', Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel; 'Post Fossil', 21_21 Design Sight, The Issey Miyake Foundation, Tokyo.

William Cobbing



↑ *Dorset*, 2014
Glazed ceramic
81 × 65 × 4.3 cm
(31⅞ × 25⅝ × 1⅝ in)

↗ *What Are Words Worth?*, 2015
Live performance
Kammer Klang at Café Oto, London

→ *The Kiss*, 2004
Single-channel video
3:33 min
Installation view, 'Revolver 3' exhibition, Matt's Gallery London, 2012

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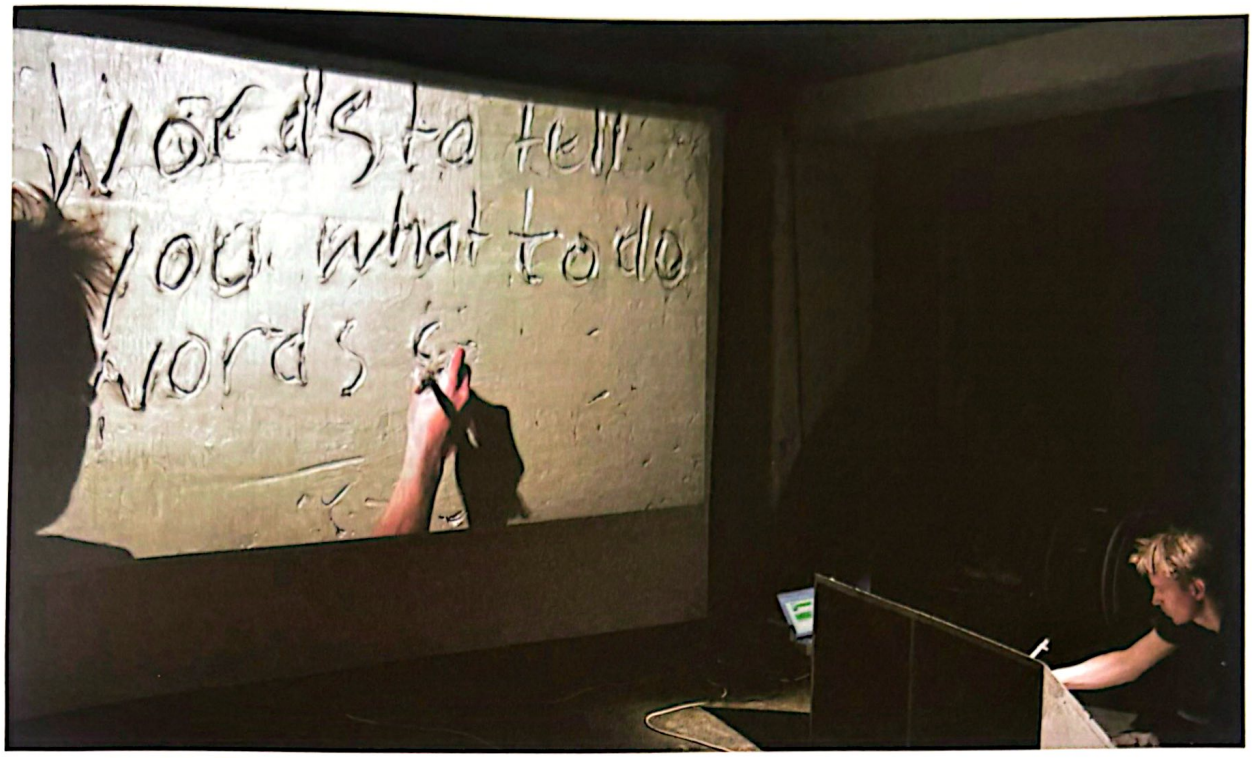



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The notion of the vessel is central to Tommaso Corvi-Mora's work, which is informed by the long history of ceramic production, from antiquity to the modern age. Corvi-Mora has been involved in art for many years, working as a curator, writer and, most notably, a gallerist. His ceramic work, however, is a relatively recent development, beginning in 2010 with a course of evening classes. Expecting to finish after just a few months, he became so absorbed with the process that he continued, progressing swiftly from tentative experiments to an established studio practice. Positioning his work firmly within the lineage of studio pottery, Corvi-Mora embraces traditional techniques. Fundamental to his practice is the potter's wheel, where each vessel begins to take shape. Working quickly on the wheel, intuition and a degree of spontaneity play an important role, but his works are not improvised; each piece is considered and begins life as a drawing.

For Corvi-Mora ceramics are at once functional and mysterious. He is fascinated by the quotidian role they have played in various cultures throughout history, as well as their esoteric function in long-lost rituals and religious ceremonies. This dichotomy is reflected by the divergent nature of his output, which ranges from familiar items of domestic stoneware (teapots, bowls, water jugs, vases and the like) to arcane objects inspired by historical cultural rites. For instance, a recent untitled series of tall pots (2016–ongoing) was inspired by the *loutrophoros* water vase of ancient Greece, a distinctive vessel with a long neck and two handles used in pre-nuptial ritual baths and funeral rites. Islamic culture was the springboard for *Guards* (2015–16), an installation of sixteen ambiguous vessels inspired by the terracotta water pots found outside mosques across the Middle East. Explicit references to Western architecture can also be observed, such as apse-like recesses inspired by Byzantine and Romanesque churches, in addition to the influence of British studio potters Walter Keeler and Simon Carroll. Each pot, formed from either black or brown clay, is decorated with a porcelain slip glaze. This deliberate contrast between the humble and the elegant is intended to emphasize the deep-rooted hierarchies that persist in ceramic production.

The distinction between art and craft is routinely dismissed by Corvi-Mora, and he is interested in contextualizing his work beyond the confines of the gallery. Not only is this demonstrated by his functional wares produced for everyday use, but also by the series 'Ceramic Consigned to the City' (2012–ongoing), for which ceramic pots are abandoned on the streets of London and other cities. Their fate is left to chance, though they are usually pilfered within a matter of hours. It is a gesture emblematic of Corvi-Mora's entire approach, which does not merely test the boundaries between the conventions of so-called high and low art, but revels in ignoring them altogether. • David Trigg

Tommaso Corvi-Mora Born 1969, Piacenza, Italy. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Guards', Duro Olowu, London; 2015 – 'Anima' (with Dan Perfect), Rochester Art Gallery, Kent, UK; Duro Olowu; 2014 – 'Cross/Over', Duro Olowu. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Making & Unmaking', Camden Arts Centre, London; 2015 – 'Runnymede Revisited', St Peter's Church, Oare, Kent; 'Ceramic And Graphite', Galerie Chert, Berlin; 2014 – 'More Material', Salon 94, New York; 2012 – 11 Kinnerton Street, London.

Tommaso Corvi-Mora





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← *Guards* [detail], 2015–16
Stoneware, porcelain, transparent glaze
One of sixteen parts:
37 × 20 × 13 cm
14 ⅝ × 8 × 5 in

↙ *Untitled (functional ware)*, 2016
Glazed porcelain
11 × 5 × 5 cm
(4 ⅜ × 2 × 2 in)
15 × 7 × 7 cm
(5 ⅞ × 2¾ × 2¾ in)
17 × 8 × 8 cm
(6 ⅝ × 3⅛ × 3⅛ in)

→ *Guards* [detail], 2015–16
Stoneware, porcelain, transparent glaze
One of sixteen parts:
35 × 19.5 × 13.5 cm
(14 × 7 × 5 in)

→→ *Guards* [detail], 2015–16
Stoneware, yarn
One of sixteen parts:
39.5 × 16 × 16 cm
(15 × 6 × 6 in)

↘ *Guards* [detail], 2015–16
Stoneware, porcelain
One of sixteen parts:
41 × 14 × 14 cm
(16 × 5 × 5 in)

↓ *Guards* [detail], 2015–16
Stoneware, porcelain, transparent glaze
One of sixteen parts:
44 × 11 × 13.5 cm
(16 × 4 × 5 in)









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American artist Liz Craft has created a hallucinogenic array of characters: clowns, mermaids, unicorns, a roller-skating Egyptian pharaoh, skeletons dancing as The Three Graces, and Siamese twins have taken shape as playful, cartoon-like sculptures. She is interested in mixing media that would not normally dovetail, ranging from papier mâché to wool and bronze, blurring any distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture.

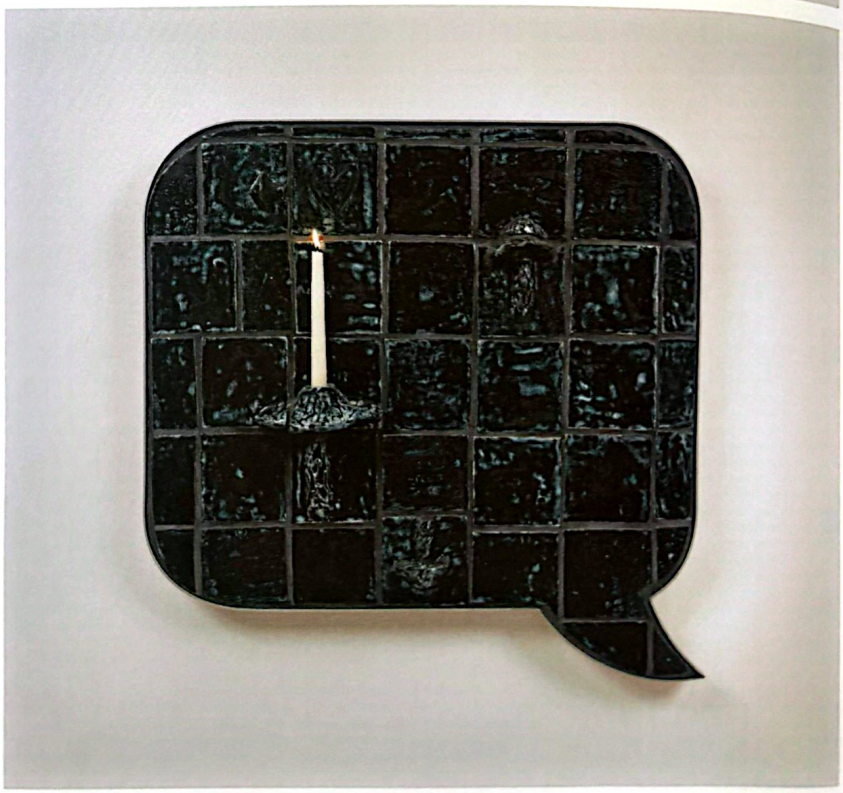
Attending the Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles in 1992, she initially experimented with firing metal in clay. It was in 2002, during a residency at a clay factory in Guadalajara, Mexico, that she really began to push her ideas about how to use this material: 'I wanted to make a tile floor ... this was the seed for my later works.' Indeed, this is evident in her recent wall-mounted pieces *Black Mushroom Bubble* (2016) and *Web Bubble II* (2016) – flat ceramic-tile speech bubbles that, when installed, appear to emanate from the mouths of sculptures (limp puppet-like figures standing in space). In the former, the bubble sprouts long-stemmed clay mushrooms with caps containing flickering candles that draw our gaze into a surface of deep forest-green (so dark it is almost black); by contrast, the metallic silver glaze of the latter reflects the light in a concentric-circle pattern reminiscent of a spider's web. Imprints of hearts and smiley faces are drawn into the clay using a forefinger. Smartphone message bubbles and emoticons are evoked, but the artificial glare of the screen shifts into a warm incandescent glow. Craft likes the fact 'that [clay] has a place in the world, tile walls and floors ... I can have that connection and then let it slip into a more imaginary space.'

Originally sculpting in plaster, she realized that clay was both faster to work with and easier to manipulate: 'I figured out that if I used the right clay, I could be sloppy ... like drawings or sketches.' In *Me Princess*, her 2016 installation at the 'Liste' art fair in Basel, Craft modelled clay to depict a nude female squatting open-legged and resting on poles emanating from her buttocks and feet. Hair neatly scooped to the side and secured with a tiara (her only clothing), the rest of her body is dimpled and dappled, bearing the marks of clay that was added, bit by bit, and then rapidly prodded, pushed and poked into place. Subsequently cast in bronze, the sculpture is purposefully discombobulating, its colour matching that of pale pink, earthen ceramics and giving the impression that the original clay model has been fired. Candy-coral rouge messily highlights the figure's nipples, lips and vulva. The work is not erotic, the slumped pose offset by a goggle-eyed stare and frozen smile; rather, Craft's female is a humorous caricature who speaks with emoji-icon lips and shimmering, wordless web bubbles. The art-historical trope of the female nude is updated with lighthearted candour, reminiscent of contemporary reality TV, where all is exposed but noting is really said.
• Louisa Elderton

Liz Craft Born 1970, Los Angeles. Lives and works in Los Angeles and Berlin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Neue Welt: Liz Craft, Pentti Monkkonen', Liszt, Berlin; 2016 – 'Love Streams', Schloss, Oslo; 'Blow Me', Real Fine Arts, Brooklyn, New York; 2015 – 'Big Girls', Truth and Consequences, Geneva; 'Secret Lives of Spiders', Jenny's, Los Angeles; 2013 – 'Temple of Folly', LAND Projects, Los Angeles; 2010 – 'Past and Present', Marianne Boesky, New York; 'Death of a Clown', Patrick Painter Inc., Santa Monica, California; 2009 – 'Project Room: Liz Craft', Alison Jacques Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'Aubades: Land Art for Aliens', Weiss Falk, Basel, Switzerland; 'Medusa', Musee d'art Moderne de la Ville Paris, France; 'Forms of Identity: Women in the 90s', Orange County Museum of Art, CA; 2016 – 'Gebärden und Ausdruck', Halle Für Kunst, Luneberg, Germany; 'How to Cut Your Throat and Smile', Schloss; 'Mirror Cells', Whitney Museum of Art, New York; 'All Right', Redling Fine Arts, Los Angeles.

Liz Craft





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Web Bubble 11, 2016
Ceramic, grout, aluminium, wood, candle
66 × 48 × 6 cm
(25 ½ × 18 ¾ × 2 ⅜ in)

Black Mushroom Bubble, 2016
Ceramic, grout, aluminium, wood, candle
76.2 × 80 cm
(30 × 31 ½ in)

Installation view, 'Mirror Cells' exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2017

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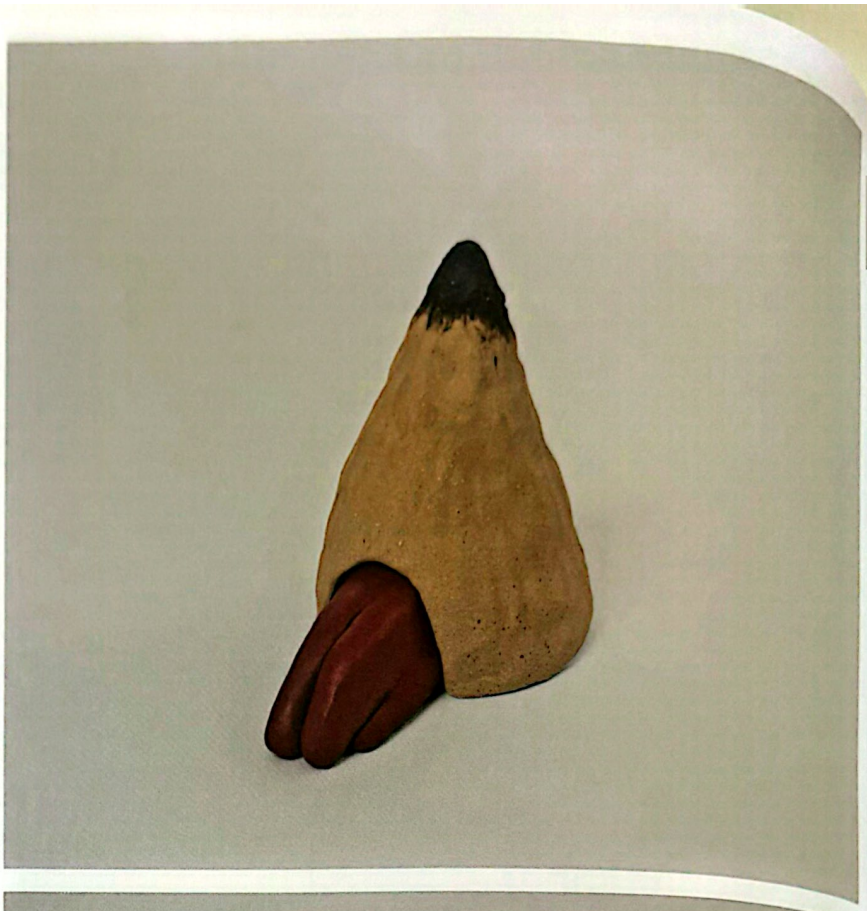
I can't help but let my imagination run wild when I look at the artworks of Katie Cuddon. They are akin to physical snippets or clues from surreal stories, fables or myths. Take for example *Listener* (2015), where a slab of poked and prodded ceramic has been painted white and recalls a submarine out of which an oversized burgundy periscope protrudes. As the work's title points out, this device is meant for listening; I picture slowly extracting the sheep's wool that has been stuffed into the opening (which the artist collects from fields while walking in Northumberland). Or there's *Untitled* (2016), evoking a volcano with a dark, ash-stained peak, at whose base protrudes a giant, muscular form. It is the colour of liver – deep, dark red – and could be a thick split tongue, or bunched fingers; either way, I fantasize that it begins to wriggle and talk, perhaps the top of the mountain starts to smoke. And as for *"I no longer know what the money is"* (2010), a work that aims to question the value of things, a large amorphous form recalls the bulbous body of an ancient whale, perhaps washed up after years of searching the sea but never finding its bounty.

Cuddon has worked with clay since 1999 while studying at the Glasgow School of Art. Often responding to prose poetry, and in a recent interview she described how their narrative quality comes from 'the desire to make work which stands up against language ... [and] a suspicion of the ease with which we might ascribe words to complex, visual and often emotional subjects'. Perhaps this explains why her objects are so hard to pin down. While seemingly anthropomorphic, they remain strangely elusive and nonspecific, not quite one thing or another. For her, 'they occupy an awkward space in-between subjects and consciously avert language. I think of the works as linguistic stutters and exponents of the inadequacy of words.'

As with literature and writing, clay is a recorder of marks and Cuddon calls to mind the twentieth-century French sculptor Germaine Richier's comment on clay: 'the more you touch it, the more it screams'. Cuddon's sculptures see thin skins of clay being gradually built up, retaining the movements of her fingertips to create a textured, 'masticated' – a word that she pointedly uses by way of connecting the mouth, language and clay – surface that slowly takes (indefinite) form. We see this in *A Problem of Departure* (2013), where two upturned stumps protrude from a rounded mound, its dimpled, pale pink surface hinting at a pair of fleshy cellulite-stained thighs that squeeze between them a pillow – to keep something in, or perhaps help it to come out? Either way, the clay's rough, pitted surface appears emotively raw when set against the smooth, bouncy cushion and if you stop to imagine the sculpture's story, you can almost hear it wailing. • Louisa Elderton





Katie Cuddon Born 1979, London. Lives and works in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2014 – 'Pontoon Lip', Collaboration with Celia Hempton, Cell Projects, London; 2011 – 'Spanish Lobe', Camden Arts Centre, London; 2010 – '"I no longer know what the money is"', Alma Enterprises, London; 2008 – 'Overshoot and Collapse', Globe Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Buffet d'art', Ambika P3, London; 'Sticky Intimacy: Katie Cuddon, Emma Hart & Nicholas Pope', Chapter, Cardiff, UK; 'Layered Narratives', L'étrangère, London. 2013 – 'Material Matters', Gerald Moore Gallery, London; 2012 – 'Studio Voltaire Members Show', Studio Voltaire, London; 'Stone of Folly', Downstairs Gallery, Hereford, UK; 2011 – 'Friendship of The Peoples', Simon Oldfield Gallery, London; 2010 – 'New Symphony', Simon Oldfield Gallery, London; 2009 – 'Spazi Aperti', Accademia di Romania, Rome; 2007 – 'Stick* Stamp*Fly', Gasworks, London.

Katie Cuddon

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← *Untitled*, 2016
Buff, black and painted ceramic
17 × 9 × 13 cm
(6¾ × 3½ × 5⅛ in)

↙ *Shame*, 2014
Painted ceramic and fired black clay
50 × 37 × 77 cm
(19⅝ × 14½ × 30⅜ in)

→ *A Problem of Departure*, 2013
Painted ceramic, pillow
64 × 43 × 30 cm
(25¼ × 16⅞ × 11¾ in)

↘ *You must be able to act independently*, 2011
Ceramic
30 × 30 × 10 cm
(7⅞ × 7⅞ × 3⅞ in)

↓ *"I no longer know what the money is"*, 2010
Painted ceramic
23 × 90 × 60 cm
(9⅛ × 35½ × 23⅝ in)







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Performance is at the heart of Filipino-Danish artist Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen's practice. In a 2014 interview, she describes how 'I see myself as a living sculpture that talks'. Her performances are either observed by a live audience or documented in video. The body – her own, or that of family members and friends — is significant in terms of its relationship to space, and it becomes a means through which to interrogate personal identity, constructs of gender, ethnicity and culture.

Cuenca Rasmussen first used clay in 2013 when performing at the festival 'Unten am Havn' (which connects the cities of Copenhagen and Hamburg). Impersonating Edvard Eriksen's famous sculpture *The Little Mermaid* (1913) – based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale and now a national symbol of Denmark – she reproduced its pose while covered in the local clay from Hamburg called 'Die Elbmarsch Ton'. In a recent interview, Cuenca described how the work's symbolism sought to question 'how a person's origin [might] influence her/his character. Where we come from: does it matter at all, or do we easily adapt to foreign ground?' Sociological discussions of nature versus nurture arise here, with the artist questioning what *really* makes us who we are.

In her 2014 exhibition 'Being Human Being 1' at Copenhagen's Kunsthal Nikolaj, over the space of seven days she invited family and colleagues to immerse themselves in a landscape of clay that had been transferred into the gallery. *Lucy* was produced on the first day (its title referring to Ethiopia's fossil of early *Homo erectus* – upright man), where the artist herself lay in ritualistic fashion surrounded by flickering candles, her skin caked in a layer of thick slurry, slowly drying and cracking. The public was invited to light the candles and mould small offerings using the clay. The surrounding bed was resultantly kneaded and sculpted, with traces of fingermarks still discernible, tiny stacks of clay or curved cups, and a thin arch curved over Cuenca Rasmussen's feet. Over subsequent days, her mother, siblings and daughter made body prints on canvas of their hands, feet and faces; red and brown clays coating flesh and then being pressed into the cloth. These reams of fabric were draped around the space, equating to a time-based portrait of the familial bodies that had engaged with this environment.

This all brings to mind the 1970s 'Silueta' series of Cuban artist Ana Mendieta, who felt that 'art must have begun as nature itself', smothering her body with blooms of white flowers or leaving silhouette imprints in mud, clay and sand. For Mendieta, this was a symbolic process of spiritually merging with nature. For Cuenca Rasmussen, clay is an organic material with beautiful variations in colour and texture; a sumptuous and sensual means of exploring selfhood as body meets material. Clay coats the skin with its own oozing thickness and colour, and, to a degree, culture and ethnicity are indiscernible beneath muddy limbs or imperceptible in the body prints. Above all else, we are human and adapt to the earth beneath our feet. • Louisa Elderton

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Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen Born 1970, Manila, Philippines. Lives and works in Copenhagen. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Vestige', Drawing Room, Manila; 2016 – 'Being human being 2', Hans & Fritz Contemporary, Barcelona; 2014 – 'Being Human Being 1', Kunsthal Nikolaj, Copenhagen; 'Melodic Skies dropping down to Earth, making Trees fly', Röda Sten Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden; 'Inbetweeness', Horsens Art Museum, Denmark; 2013 – 'Mobile Mirrors', Christian Larsen Gallery, Stockholm; 'Anger ist Power', MOCA Roskilde, Denmark; 2011 – 'Afghan Hound', Location One, New York; 2010 – Heidelberger Kunstverein, Germany; 2006 – 'EgoShow', X-Room, The National Gallery, SMK, Copenhagen. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Body Compositions, 1-3: Unknown Landscapes', North Coast Art Triennial, Tegners Museum, and touring to Gribskov Kommune, Denmark; 2014 – 'Immanent Geographics', The Drawing Room, Manila and Singapore; 2013 – 'The Beginning Is Always Today. Contemporary Feminist Art in Scandinavia', SKMU, Sørlandets Kunst-museum, Kristiansand, Norway, and touring to Västerås konstmuseum, Sweden; 2011 – 'Speech Matters', The Danish Pavillion, 54th Venice Biennale; 2009 – 're.act.feminism', Akademie der Künste, Berlin, and touring to International Festival of Contemporary Arts, Ljubljana; Kunsthaus Erfurt, Germany.

Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen





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↖ *Being Human Being with Jeannette Ehlers*, 2014
5-hour performance in 'Being Human Being 1' exhibition, Kunsthal Nikolaj, Copenhagen

← *Being Human Being, Faces (Lilibeth)*, 2014
5-hour performance in 'Being Human Being 1' exhibition, Kunsthal Nikolaj, Copenhagen

↑ *Lucy*, 2014
5-hour performance in 'Being Human Being 1' exhibition, Kunsthal Nikolaj, Copenhagen

↑→ Overleaf:
Installation view, 'Being Human Being' exhibition, Kunsthal Nikolaj, Copenhagen

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ibeth Cuenca Rasmussen

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Phoebe Cummings makes installations that are often large scale and site responsive, using raw clay that is unfired and unglazed. Cummings's choice of material makes her work akin to performance; her pieces function as events that are made and encountered in situ.

In 2011 Cummings held a residency at Siobhan Davies Dance Studios in London, where she 'responded to the rhythms' of the studios around her. Her own hands are ever present in each work, whether in the indentations left by her digits squeezing wet clay around a rope, or the dextrous work that her fingers have enacted on tiny elements that make up a complex whole. This evidence of her body and its activity gives a sense of choreography to her work.

Time is an important element in her installations, because of the unstable quality of wet clay, and through the process of accumulation, works become heavily laden with layers of intricately worked components. This weightiness creates a metaphor for time – the pieces lie or hang, burdened by their own making, until it seems impossible that they will keep their structural integrity. Key to many works is the tension between weight and balance: *Beneath* (2007) was suspended under water, while *Production Line* (2015) was shaped around a rope hanging from the ceiling.

The formalization of time in Western society is tied up with the regimentation of work within capitalism, and labour is another significant constituent of Cummings's practice. She has developed a vocabulary of techniques – some more traditional, such as sprig molding, and others more intuitive, such as pressing clay through a tea strainer – each of which is laborious and time consuming. Her installations reference the industrial assembly-line production of ceramics. The time and energy taken to make a piece (*Cella*, 2013, comprised 250,000 elements) draws attention to the frailty of the material and the short time that it will survive before its inevitable collapse.

Cummings repeatedly uses motifs from art history that are often highly decorative and reference natural forms. Unlike the tangled imperfection of real vegetation, Cummings's floral motifs play with the idealized, picturesque images found in landscape painting and motifs used in the decorative arts. While in residence at London's Victoria & Albert Museum in 2010, she developed an installation made of leaf shapes taken from painted or printed patterns on artefacts in the museum's collection. The impermanence of *Antediluvian Swag* (2016), a bower hung in the summer house of Roche Court, Wiltshire, drew on the tradition of the vanitas still life in art history (a form that is imbued with reminders of the fleeting nature of life) to poke fun at the overly lavish opulence of eighteenth-century ceramics and decor.

Paleozoic Bouquet (2013) presented a selection of the 500 varieties of vegetation found in London's fossilized clay. Ultimately clay is a natural material, albeit one that has gone through a process of filtering and cleansing. Cummings's focus on the transient alludes not just to the cycles of production and decay found in nature, but also in her chosen material. Once the event of her work is over, the used clay returns to the amorphous state from which it came. • Elinor Morgan

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Phoebe Cummings Born 1981, Walsall, UK. Lives and works in Stafford, UK. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2013 – 'Cella', University of Hawai'i Art Gallery, Honolulu. Selected Group Exibitions: 2017 – 'C'est le Bouquet!' Fondation Bernardaud, Limoges, France; 2016 – 'FireWorks' Gallery SO, London; 'Womans Work', AirSpace, Stoke-on-Trent, UK; 'Virginia McClure Ceramics Biennale', Visual Arts Centre, Montreal; 'Material Language', New Art Centre, Roche Court, Salisbury, UK; 2015 – 'Fragile?', National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, UK; 'Production Line', Southampton City Art Gallery, UK; 2014 – 'Arts/Industry: Collaboration and Revelation', John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI; 2013 – 'British Ceramics Biennial', Stoke-on-Trent, UK; 2012 – 'Swept Away: Dust, Ashes & Dirt in Contemporary Art & Design', MAD Museum, New York; 'Formed Thoughts', Jerwood Space, London; 2011 – 'British Ceramics Biennial Awards Exhibition', Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent; '60|40 Starting Point Series 2011', Siobhan Davies Studios, London; Down There Among The Roots, Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance, UK; 2008 – 'The Void Ratio', St Michael's Church, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.



Phoebe Cummings

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← *Paleozoic Bouquet*, 2013
Clay, glass, wood, wire
25 × 60 cm (10 × 24 in)
Installation view, Camden Arts Centre, London

→ *Antediluvian Swag* [detail], 2016
Clay, wire, steel
c.180 × 100 × 40 cm
(c.71 × 39 × 16 in)
Installation view
New Art Centre, Roche Court
Salisbury, UK

ebe Cummings

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Over twenty years Roberto Cuoghi has mastered an artistic practice that defies categorization. To explore his creative process means delving into his compulsions – a genuine thirst for knowledge that leads him to meander through human culture, paired with a continuous exploration of techniques and materials. For Cuoghi, creation is, above all, empirical learning. Once he has gained confidence and proficiency with a certain process, Cuoghi moves on to address a new infatuation, caring little about what his previous course of action has yielded.

Cuoghi's sculptures use numerous materials and techniques, each combining to produce unexpected outcomes through a working method that recalls that of the alchemist. Marble, clay, wood, epoxy are infected by agents such as termites, oxidants, glues, worms, powders or solvents. The artist's studio houses a plethora of machines, from welding equipment to flamethrowers, dentist's drills to engraving cutters, kilns to 3D printers. They are all mainly employed to rework a single figure, Pazuzu, a demon who, according to Assyrian and Babylonian mythology, was associated with the north-west wind, deliverer of famine and locusts. Worn as an amulet, Pazuzu was said to protect against plague and misfortunes. Cuoghi first appropriated a fifteen-centimetre (six-inch) talisman portraying Pazuzu from the Louvre Museum's collection, and magnified it into a six-metre (nineteen-and-a-half-foot) high fibreglass sculpture. *Pazuzu* (2008) was shown on the occasion of Cuoghi's solo exhibition at the Castello di Rivoli in Turin in 2008: placed at the museum's entrance, the demon was intended to extend his magic to the museum and its visitors.

In the years that followed, Cuoghi realized several variations of the talisman, playing with materials and techniques to further his exploration of the demon's iconography. His project to 'multiply' Pazuzu was his attempt at mining the demon's power. *SS(XXVZ)c/d/cci* (2015) is a sculpture of seven entangled Pazuzus; its upper part is made of ceramic, while its body is in white limestone partly wrapped in a bustier-like case made of drawstring. In *SS(XVZ)I* (2014), a wooden statuette of the demon almost entirely eaten by termites, Cuoghi's iconoclastic intent is even more manifest.

In *Putiferio* (2016), at the invitation of collector Dakis Joannou to realize an exhibition on the Greek island of Hydra, Cuoghi set up a one-night performative event in which he fired dozens of clay crabs in paper kilns and a rudimentary five-chamber kiln that he had built on the island's shore. The officiator at an ecstatic ceremony, Cuoghi also coloured the fired crabs through a reduction process and using brews made of yeast, proteins, sugar and iron powder. Prior to the event, he had optimized a 3D printing system that employs clay – to allow him to reproduce innumerable crab shapes – and experimented with various archaic firing processes. 'Putiferio' is Italian for 'chaos' or 'pandemonium'; to those gathered on the island on a torrid summer night, Cuoghi's kilns, disgorging infinite crabs, might have appeared an image close to hell. • Michele D'Aurizio

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Roberto Cuoghi Born 1973, Modena, Italy. Lives and works in Milan. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Madre Museum, Naples, Italy; Italian Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale; 'Roberto Cuoghi, Retrospective', Centre d'art contemporain Geneva; 2016 – 'Putiferio', DESTE Foundation Project Space, Slaughterhouse, Hydra, Greece; 2014 – 'da ida e pingala a ida e ida o pingala e pingala', Le Consortium, Dijon, France, and touring to Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; 'Šuillakku- corral version', New Museum, New York; 2011 – 'Roberto Cuoghi', UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Ether', Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; 'Curated By (?)', Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; 2015 – 'Exquisite Corpse', Galerie Chantal Crousel at The Mistake Room, Los Angeles; 'Ennesima,Una mostra di sette mostre sull'arte italiana', Triennale di Milano, Milan; 2013 – 'Collection Sandretto Re Rebaudengo: Have you seen me before?', Whitechapel Gallery, London; 'The Encyclopedic Palace', 53rd Venice Biennale; 2012 – 'The Residue of Memory', Aspen Art Museum; 2010 – '10000 Lives', Gwangju Biennale, South Korea.

Roberto Cuoghi



↑ *SS(XXVZ)c/d/cci*, 2015

→ *Putiferio*, 2016
Installation views, DESTE Foundation Project Space, Slaughterhouse, Hydra, Greece, 2016

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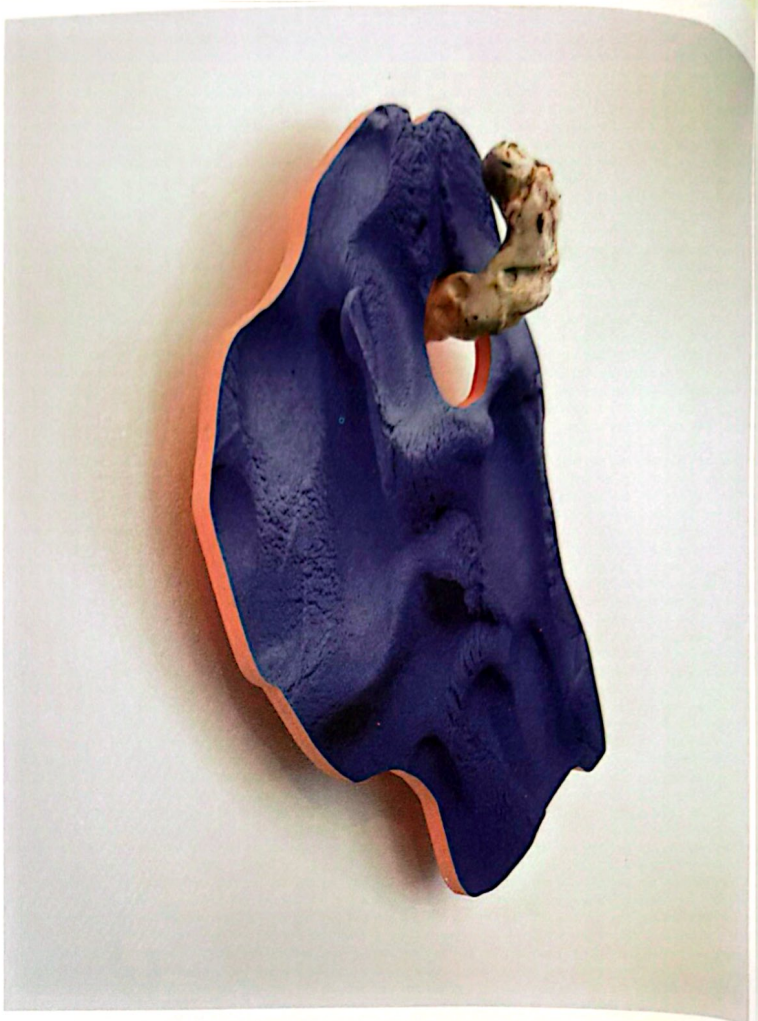
When you look closely at the surface of Dutch artist Rachel de Joode's sculpture *Here I am and things that exist. Ow! XI* (2015), its pale pink clay reveals intimate details of the artist's skin. You can see the creases where her flesh folds in upon itself; the most intricate fine lines that follow the flow of one another and form unique fingerprints; even the texture of the clay itself is alluring – porous and rough compared to the smooth, shiny body imprints. Reproduced as an archival inkjet print on PVC, these details make up an amorphous fragment – an indirect portrait of the artist, as underlined by the work's title.

De Joode first began using clay in 2002 when she photographed lumps of it, and photography remains important in her three-dimensional work. In a recent interview she described how it is 'through the use of photography, [that] my work bounces between the physical and the virtual world, exploring the relationship between the three-dimensional object and its two-dimensional counterpart.'

We think of clay as an inherently physical material that we can squish, carve, prod and pound. De Joode sees it as being simultaneously 'all surface' and 'all inside'. Today, the digital realm flattens matter so that we often experience it two dimensionally. De Joode 'sculpts' digital images of clay in Photoshop, then prints these out and cuts them into abstract shapes, returning them to the physical world beyond the screen – from earth, into digital pixels and back out into the world again as a smooth, flat inkjet image.

In *Soft Inquiry X* (2015) a close-up image of royal blue clay, lightly textured and tearing at the surface, hangs from a curved ceramic beam that protrudes from the wall. Similarly, in *Two Surfaces and a Squish* (2015) a long ceramic support rests upon a pedestal, images of peachy and pale mint clay hanging off its edge. Marble-like in their mottled, earthy colours, the ceramics themselves appear cold and hard in relation to the images of soft, porous clay. The actual material is juxtaposed with a fragmentary representation of it, zooming us in and out of its constituent surface qualities. As such, the artist's work is a constant play between representation and materiality.

She is interested in what she describes as the scrambling of knowledge: 'in seeing the world from a completely detached perspective of phenomenology', which takes into account consciousness and experience. Her handling of clay is captured and edited, rather than an autonomous object in its own right – she is singling out the marks that she wants the viewer to see, and her own experience in making those marks: 'me as art-maker (my skin, my body)'. At the same time, de Joode reproduces the conditions of our contemporary viewing experience in her images of clay – our obsession with the screen and our experience of the world through that medium. She is all about surface, and perhaps, so are we. • Louisa Elderton





Rachel de Joode Born 1979, Amersfoort, Netherlands. Lives and works in Berlin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Connective Tissue', Cinnnamon Gallery, Rotterdam, Netherlands; 'Porosity', Galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris; 'Metabolism', MACRO, Rome; 'Surfaces', Gallery Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin; 'Soft Inquiry', KANSAS gallery, New York; 2014 – 'The Matter Of It Being A Stone', SWG3 Gallery, Glasgow; 'The Molten Inner Core', Gallery Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Myths of the Marble', Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo; 2016 – 'Life Eraser', Brand New Gallery, Milan; 'What Birds Can See', DOCUMENT, Chicago; 'Body Holes by New Scenario' and 'Paloma Powers', 9th Berlin Biennale; 'Hybrid Modus, New positions in bio-, living- and digital sculpture', Skulptur Bredelaar, Netherlands; 'Un Certain Regard', Dürst Britt & Mayhew Gallery, The Hague, Netherlands.

Rachel de Joode

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- *Soft Inquiry X*, 2015
  Ceramic and archival inkjet print on PVC
  44.5 × 45 × 12 cm
  (17 ½ × 17 ¾ × 4 ¾ in)

- *Soft Inquiry XI*, 2015
  Ceramic and archival inkjet print on PVC
  39.5 × 25.5 × 12 cm
  (15 ¼ × 10 ⅛ × 4 ¾ in)

- *Across Fingers Clay*, 2015
  Archival inkjet print on Dibond
  70 × 50 cm
  (27 ⅛ × 19 ⅝ in)

- *Two Surfaces and a Squish*, 2015
  Ceramic and archival inkjet print on PVC (with pedestal)
  64 × 30.5 × 79 cm
  (25 ¼ × 12 × 31 ⅛ in)





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Edmund de Waal's ceramics are deceptively simple sculptures, worked with a historian's understanding of the medium and a virtuoso grasp of its tactile, indexical materiality. Repetition and seriality are key attributes in his practice, allowing him to create installations of grand scale that transcend pottery's typically domestic dimensions.

De Waal became a pottery fanatic after taking his first ceramics class at the age of five; as a teenager, he was a student of, and then apprenticed to, Geoffrey Whiting, a disciple of Bernard Leach, who has been described as the 'Father of British studio pottery'. Later, upon graduating with a degree in English from the University of Cambridge, he ran a short-lived stoneware kiln in Herefordshire before moving his focus to porcelain. In 1990, he studied for two years in Japan's Mejiro Ceramics studio in Tokyo, practising his art while simultaneously researching a book on Leach, which was published in 1998.

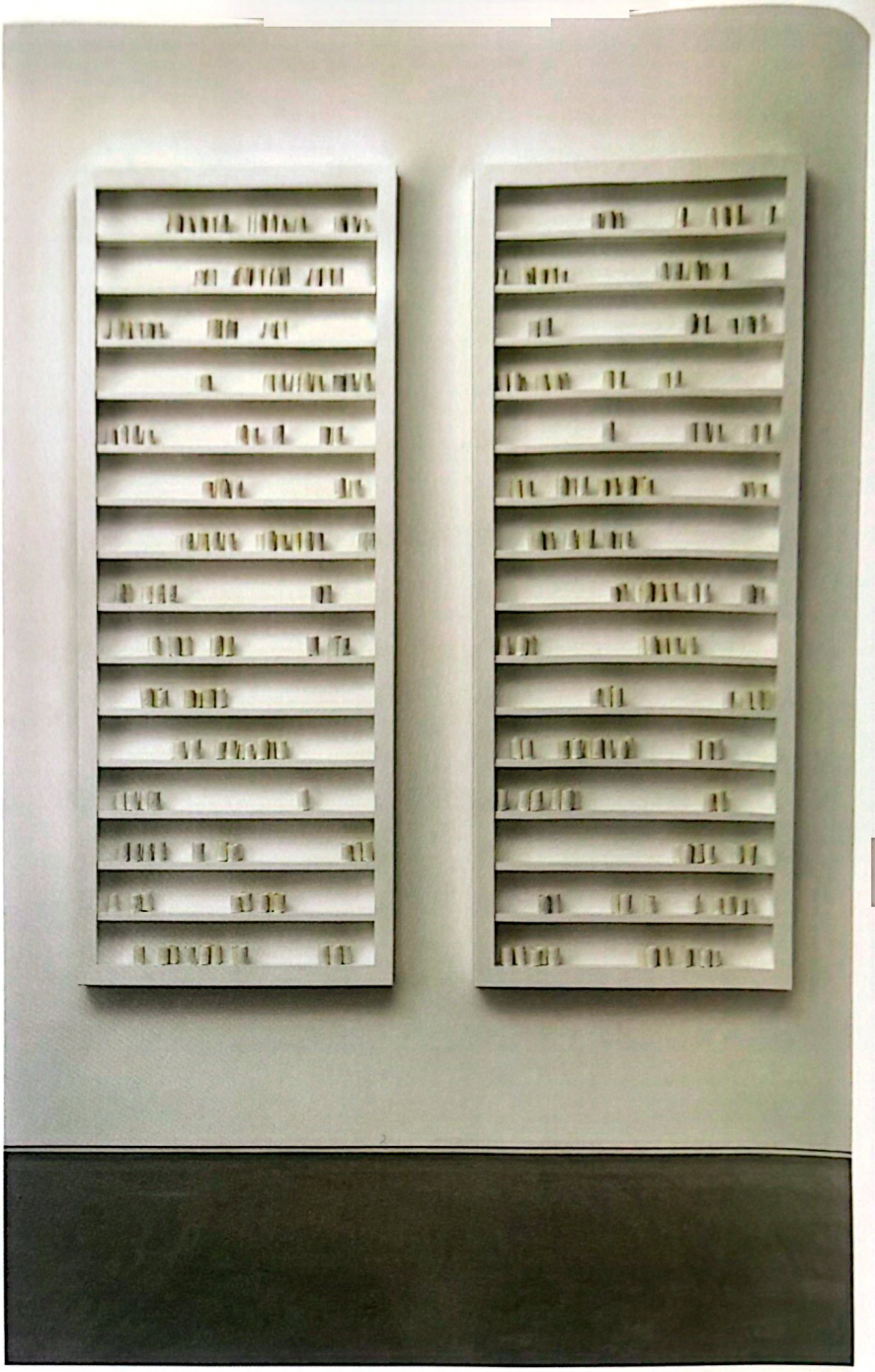
In Japan, de Waal began working in the style for which he is known today, making porcelain vessels in soft, muted washes with telltale imperfections – dimpled, pushed-in sides, say, or crooked rims. Often, he arranges these in sequences on a shelf to evoke the repetitive placement of books. Simple in appearance, the individual pots owe as much to the ancient Eastern tradition as they do to the vernacular ceramics of the West (Bauhaus is a key influence), and feel ageless as a result. He makes each of them himself, sitting on a low wooden stool at a potter's wheel; he has said his is a meditation on 'one person, spending time'.

Despite his immense success as a ceramicist, de Waal is perhaps most famous for his 2010 memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, which tells the story of his family via the histories of 264 netsuke figurines that he inherited from his great-uncle. In 2015 de Waal also published *The White Road: Journey into an Obsession*, a history of porcelain – or 'white gold – since its invention in China a thousand years ago.

Assembling large-scale installations for his exhibitions, de Waal presents his groups of pots in settings informed by his passion for architecture and space; for example the birch, ply and Plexiglass structures of *Irrkunst* (2016), or the shelves of works such as *Atemwende* (2013) and *Lichtzwang* (2014), the latter reminiscent of both Damien Hirst's medicine cabinets and the cool geometric abstractions of Agnes Martin. One of his larger creations, a red aluminium ring with a diameter of thirty-six-and-a-half metres (one-hundred-and-twenty feet) and containing 425 pots, was permanently installed in the Victoria & Albert Museum's cupola in 2009. Titled *Signs & Wonders*, de Waal has described the work as 'a very personal memory of my journeys through the V&A's ceramics collections over the last thirty years'.
• Andrew Goldstein

Edmund de Waal Born 1964, Nottingham, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Lettres de Londres', Espace Muraille, Geneva; 2016 – 'Irrkunst', Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin; 'ten thousand things', Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles; 2015 – 'The lost and the found: work from Orkney', New Art Centre, Salisbury, UK; 2014 – 'atmosphere', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; 'Lichtzwang', Theseus Temple, Vienna; 'Another Hour', Southwark Cathedral, London; 2013 – 'Atemwende', Gagosian Gallery, New York; 2012 – 'a local history', Alison Richard Building, University of Cambridge, UK; 'Edmund de Waal at Waddesdon', Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, UK; 2010 – 'Night Work', New Art Centre, Roche Courte, Wiltshire, UK; 2009 – 'Signs & Wonders', Victoria & Albert Museum, London; 2007 – 'Edmund de Waal', Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK and touring to mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 'Night Work', New Art Centre, Roche Courte, Wiltshire, UK; 2016–17 – 'During the Night', Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; 'Kneaded Knowledge: The Language of Ceramics', Universal museum Joanneum, Graz, Austria; 2016 – Seeing Round Corners', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; 'Found', Foundling Museum, London; 2015–16 – 'white', The Royal Academy of Arts, London; 2015 – 'wavespeech', The Pier Arts Centre, Orkney, UK.

Edmund de Waal



↑ *Lichtzwang*, 2014
281 porcelain vessels with gilding in a pair of wood, aluminium and glass vitrines
Each 274.5 × 120 × 13.5 cm, hung 30 cm apart
(108 3/16 × 47 1/4 × 5 5/16 in, hung 11 13/16 in apart)
Overall: 274.5 × 270 × 13.5 cm
(108 1/16 × 106 5/16 × 5 5/16 in)

↗ *Atemwende*, 2013
302 porcelain vessels in an aluminium and Plexiglass cabinet
222 × 300 × 13 cm
(87 3/8 × 118 1/8 × 5 1/8 in)

→ *Irrkunst*, 2016
119 porcelain vessels and shards in five birch ply, and Plexiglass structures.
3 sections: 301.8 × 300.5 × 153 cm
(118 13/16 × 118 5/16 × 60 1/4 in)
2 sections: 301.8 × 105 × 153 cm
(118 13/16 × 41 5/16 × 60 1/4 in)
Installation view, Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin

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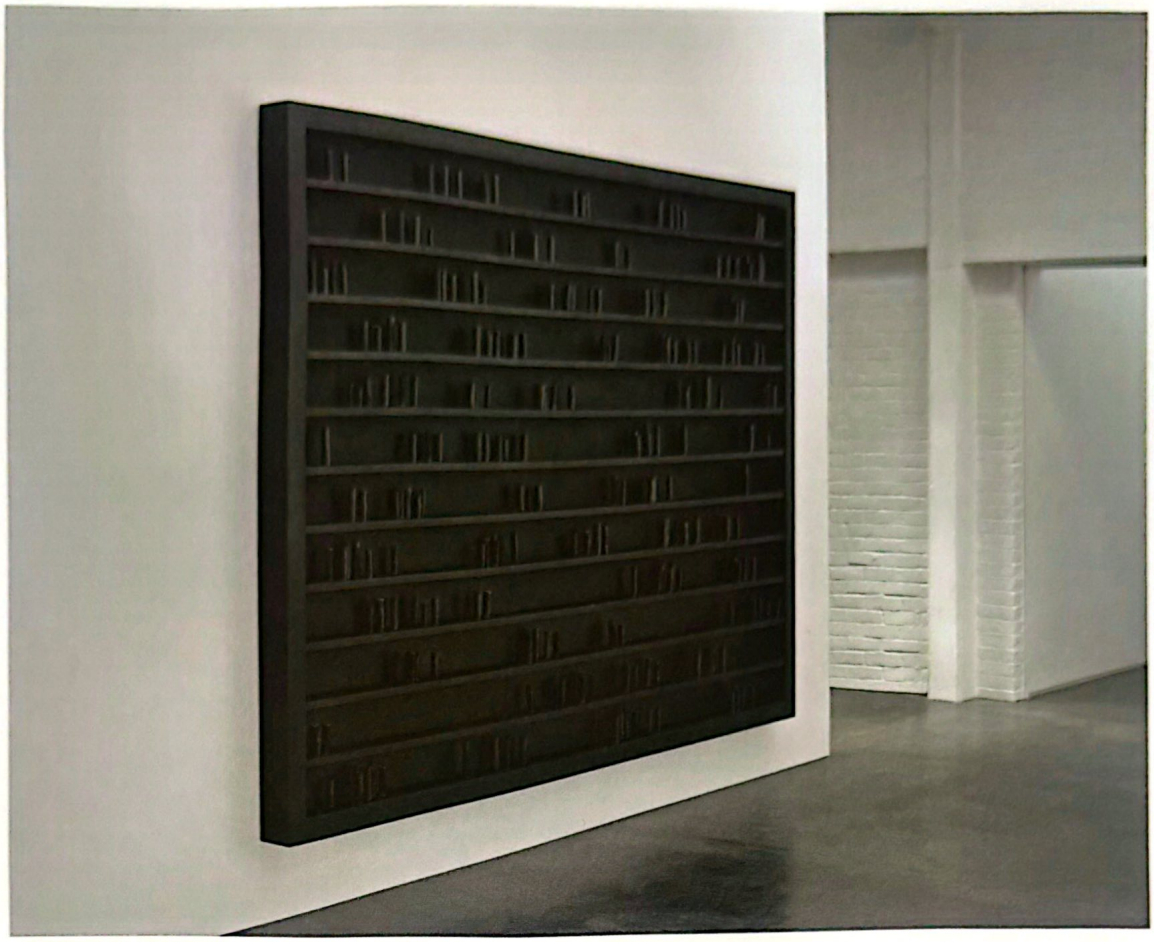

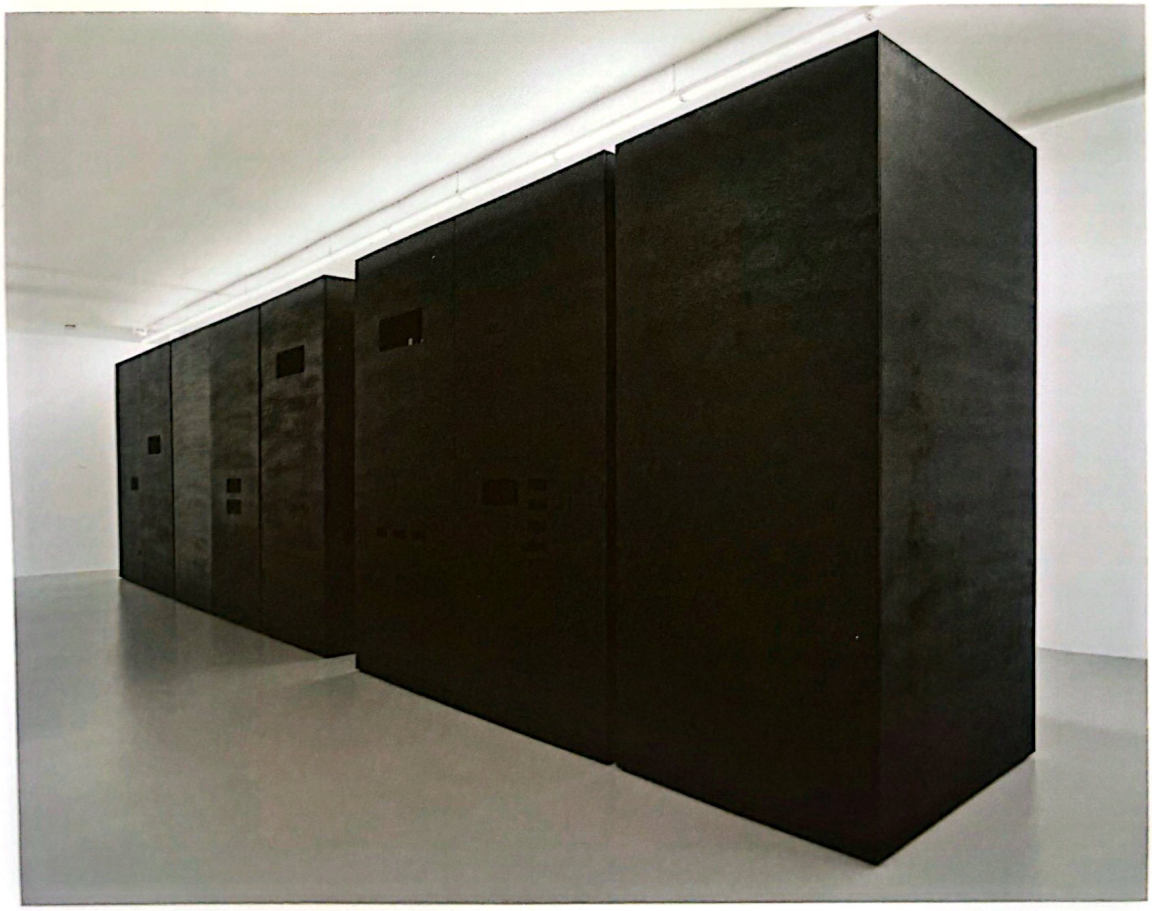

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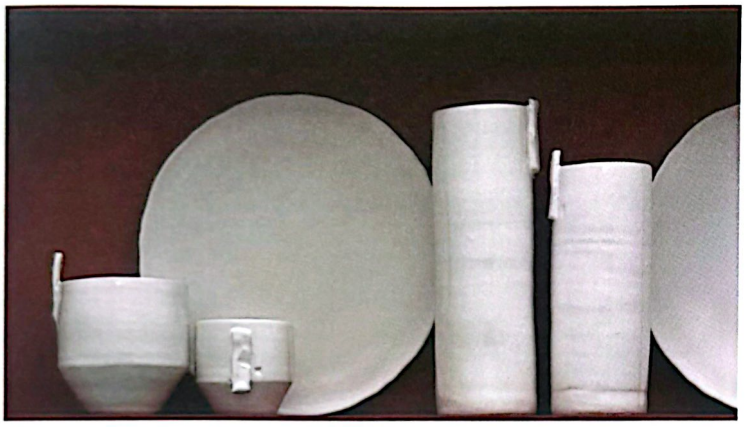



→ *Signs & Wonders* [detail], 2009
Glazed porcelain (425 vessels) and powder-coated aluminium circular shelf
Installation view, Ceramic Galleries, V&A Museum, London

mund de Waal

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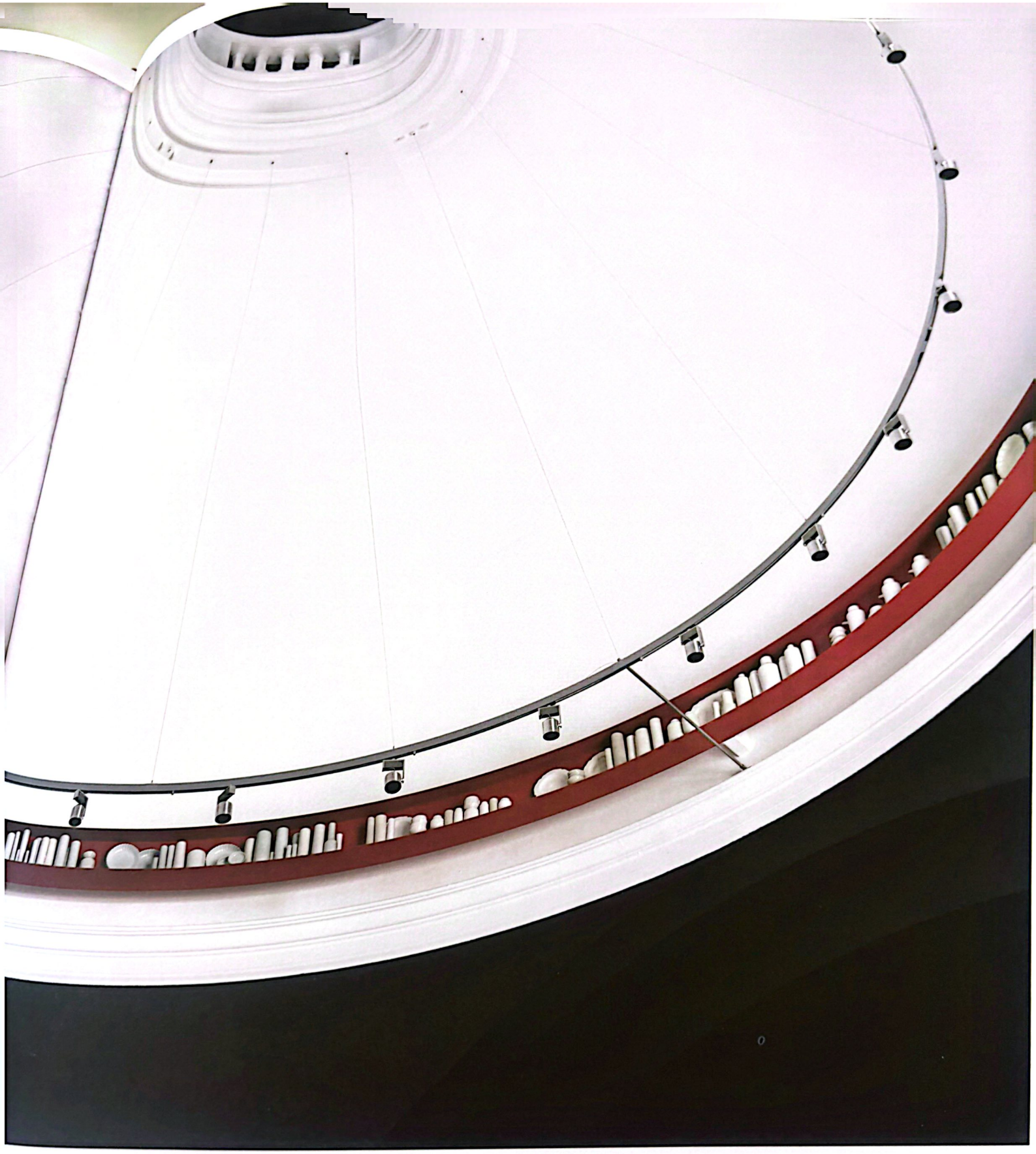

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Clay, for Richard Deacon, is just one of a number of different materials whose formal and physical qualities have been explored and tested to their limits. Following on from leather, steel, wood, terracotta, marble, brass and linoleum, Deacon only began working with clay in the mid-1990s, well into a career that began in the 1970s, and it now forms a key part of his practice. He is perhaps best known for his abstract sculptures, sinuous or geometric shapes that range in size from the domestic-scale 'Art for Other People' series (1982–ongoing) to the epic public sculpture *Between the Eyes* (1990).

The relatively high tensile strength of his most commonly used materials – wood and metal – affords Deacon the possibility of constructing unlikely forms, inventing new techniques to press his materials into ever more wondrous shapes. The effect is playful, inviting the eye to follow the curves and corners of his forms and to marvel at their construction, but rarely, if ever, attempting to cover up the nuts and bolts and joins that hold them together. Ceramic however, especially when glazed and fired, maintains an element of secrecy; finished colours may not resemble the powders and slips that were previously applied, the overall form shrinks slightly during the drying process, and the interior structure of the object is often hidden from view.

Despite its inherent brittleness, ceramic has not restricted Deacon's interest in stretching the properties of his material in such a way that it no longer resembles itself. Similarly, his often suggestive titles may or may not resemble the forms of his sculptures. He has admitted that this process happens after the work itself is completed, remarking in an interview in 1999 that 'seeing resemblances and recognizing that things look like other things is part of how we meet the world ... the material is of the world but also sustains an imaginative response, so that it points in two directions at once.'

One group of works titled 'Range' (2005) has been carved to resemble industrial piping, while the more recent 'Republic' series has the appearance of having been constructed from painted or powder-coated metal beams. As well as carving clay, Deacon has cast it, moulded it into sculptural form or even used it as a building material. One of his largest ceramic works, *Fold* (2012), stands at just under four metres (thirteen feet), while his designs for the facade of One Eagle Place on London's Piccadilly with Eric Parry Architects (completed 2013) resulted in polychromatic and sculptural ceramic surfaces that seem to ripple and flex as one passes by.

Another series of ceramic objects, titled 'Flat' (2014–15), employs combinations of glazes redolent of the organic surfaces and variegated colours of Chinese scholars' rocks – swirling clouds or landscapes viewed from space seem to be contained within Deacon's geometric shapes. The 'imaginative response' prompted by his complex weaving of structure in space is translated here into the simple pleasure of viewing compositions of colour and texture on a flat surface. • Rebecca Lewin

Richard Deacon Born 1949, Bangor, Wales, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'What You See is What You get', San Diego Museum of Art; Prague City Gallery; 'Nevermind', Middelheim Museum, Antwerp, Belgium; 2016 – 'Out Of Line – Drawings 1968–2016', Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany; 2015 – 'On The Other Side', Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland, and touring to Heydar Aliyev Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan; Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany; 2014 – Tate Britain, London; 2012 – Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Malaga', Spain. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Utopias/ Heterotopia', Wuzhen International Contemporary Art Exhibition, China; 'Night In The Museum', Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK; 2015 – '3 hommes dans un bateau – Richard Deacon / Sui Jianguo / Henk Visch – Etre sculpteur aujourd'hui', Fondation Maeght, Saint Paul de Vence, France; 'Making It: Sculpture in Britain 1977–1986', Longside Gallery and touring to Mead Art Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, UK; and City Art Centre, Edinburgh; 2014 – 'The Language Of Human Consciousness', Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudia Arabia; 'Body & Void: Echoes of Moore in Contemporary Art', Henry Moore Foundation, Perry Green, Hertfordshire, UK; 2013 – 'La Qualité de l'Ombre 3 x 3 Künstler Europas_European Artists', Ludwig Museum, Koblenz, Germany.

Richard Deacon



† *No Green*, 2012
Glazed ceramic
75 × 90 × 75 cm
(29 ½ × 35 ½ × 29 ½ in)

↗ *Fold*, 2012
Glazed ceramic and steel
390 × 398 × 206 cm
(153 ½ × 156 ¾ × 81 in)

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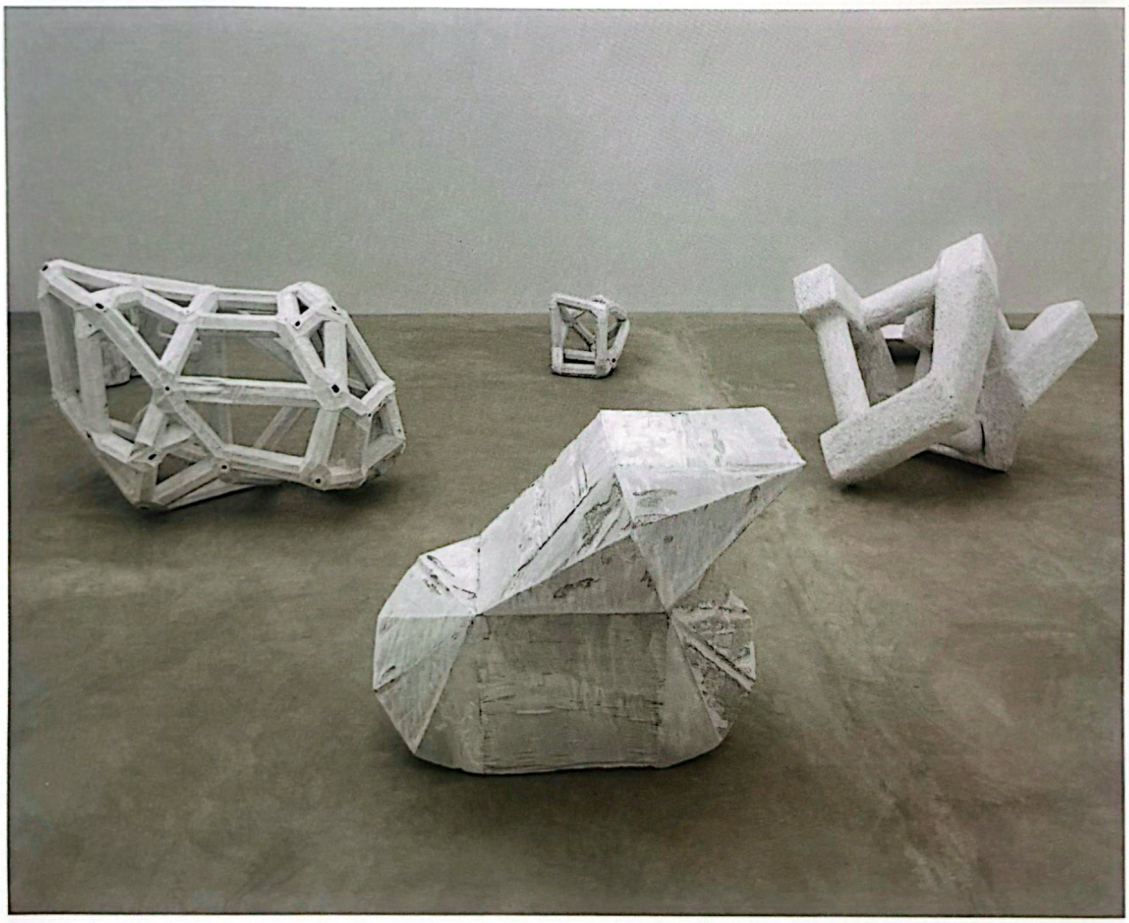
← *Flat 5*, 2014
Glazed dark clay
15 × 82 × 82 cm
(6 × 32¼ × 32¼ in)

‹ Installation view, 'Richard Deacon: On The Other Side' exhibition, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland, 2015

→ *Red Republic*, 2010
Glazed ceramic
35 × 52 × 47 cm
(13¾ × 20½ × 18½ in)



Richard Deacon

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The American artist Francesca DiMattio's often monumental sculptures – some require a forklift truck to move them – graft historical and contemporary elements together. Fragments of Wedgwood, Chinoiserie, Ming dynasty ceramics and Delft pottery are recombined in Frankenstein creations. DiMattio fabricates each pot from scratch, performing what could be described as post-modern sampling; her sculptures simultaneously reconstruct history and deconstruct it, and this combination lies at the heart of much of her practice. The artist integrates the elegant and the ad-hoc, bringing the decorative into close proximity with something altogether more rugged. The resulting sculptures look molten and unstable; in some, nails have been embedded into the surface to amplify a sense of aggression. DiMattio's rupturing – of history and style – is both formal and conceptual, and upends polite notions of femininity. She first made a name for herself as a painter, and she translates this painterliness into her ceramics. The brightly coloured epoxy she uses to glue the various elements together looks like icing sugar while recalling the impasto of oil paint.

Alongside vases and pots, DiMattio has tackled other domestic items including chandeliers. In *Chandelabra I* (2014), this icon of luxury and wealth looks encrusted, as if it's been submerged in seawater for many years. As in her paintings, the surfaces of DiMattio's ceramics are restless and full of detail. There is something Rococo in the artist's preference for curvilinear and serpentine ornamental motifs. DiMattio's work is very much about pleasure, both in terms of making and looking, and a recent show – held at Pippy Houldsworth in London – was even called 'Confection', making explicit the artist's intentions. In works such as *Bloemenhouder* ('Flower Holder', 2015), she translates the absurd and excessive qualities of Dutch tulip holders into a large vessel punctured with holes that recall eyes or orifices. The work draws connections between the domestic and something more overtly aggressive. The artist reminds us that in the process of cutting the flower, we are also wounding it; pleasure and pain often overlap.

DiMattio's use of ceramic, with its inherent fragility, deftly counters any accusation of monumentality. I'm reminded of the Japanese tradition of *kintsugi* where potters would gild cracked pots with gold leaf to call attention to the imperfect and transient nature of objects. DiMattio's sculptures similarly feel like they've already lived an entire life. The work *Black Confection* (2015) articulates many of her concerns. Incorporating stoneware and porcelain, the delicate floral patterns of a broken vase are countered by the lava-like clay that seems to be keeping it all together. Flowers proliferate and pink and blue bunting-like patterns have been added by the artist onto the black surface. Of course, flowers can signify both celebration and commiseration, and alongside the artist's unrelenting energy there remains a hint of pathos. DiMattio's work holds these oppositional senses together – creation and destruction, elegance and roughness – to bring a sense of vigour to ceramics.
• George Vasey

Francesca DiMattio Born 1981, New York. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Francesca DiMattio', Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London; 'Francesca DiMattio: Domestic Sculpture', Salon 94, New York; 2014 – 'Francesca DiMattio: Housewares', Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston; 2013 – 'Francesca DiMattio: Vertical Arrangements', Zabludowicz Collection, London; 2011 – 'Francesca DiMattio', ICA, Boston; 2009 – 'Francesca DiMattio: Decollage', Locust Projects, Miami. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – '5 Years at Heddon Street', Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London; 2015 – 'Pure Paint for Now People', Mary Elizabeth Dee Shaw Gallery, Weber State University; 2012 – 'Affinity Atlas', Wellin Museum of Art, New York; 'Modern Talking', Cluj Museum, Romania; 2011 – 'Vanishing Points, Paint and Paintings from the Debra and Dennis Scholl Collection', Bass Museum of Art, Miami; 'Make', White Flag Projects, St. Louis, Missouri; 'Four Rooms', Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski, Castle, Warsaw; 2010 – 'Abstract America, New Painting from US', Saatchi Gallery, London.

Francesca DiMattio





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Nathalie Djurberg's animated clay films – or 'claymations' – have been compared with ancient mythologies, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the grotesques of Goya, Freudian psychology and the dark folk tales collected by the brothers Grimm. Working since 2004 with her partner, the musician and composer Hans Berg who creates the music for her animations, Djurberg has developed a distinct visual style, where the malleable and dense materiality of clay is put into play in surrealist narratives that investigate power relations, sexual obsessions and bodily disintegration. The intriguing poetic language of these films emerges from the tension between their apparent child-like innocence and the debased human behaviour they depict.

Unfolding in small, secluded spaces, a sort of psychological compression chamber, some films appear as condensations of primal impulses – investigations of the animal core dug deep under humanity's cultural varnish. As in an early meditation on teenage sexuality, *Tiger Licking Girl's Butt* (2004), a breakthrough piece shown at the Berlin Biennial where a tiger, locked up in a small bedroom adorned with floral wallpaper, follows a young woman, repeatedly letting its tongue run over her buttocks. Such compulsions recur in later films, often in the interplay between human and object: a woman repetitively rubs her body against a giant banana, or a muscular man squeezes a circular, inflated swimming aid between his large hands in an obsessive rhythm.

Djurberg, who in interviews underlines the sculptural qualities of her practice, painstakingly makes every figure, set and prop by hand. The figures are animated using simple stop-motion techniques, which Djurberg taught herself at art school, and the narrative of her films is unscripted, unfolding intuitively against the initial background scenarios or ideas. In several works, the figures seem to spill from the screen into the gallery, creating larger sculptural environments, such as the installation *The Experiment* (2009), awarded a Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale, where a dense tropical flower garden – a surreal Eden – surrounds three projections, showing haunting scenarios featuring old men in clerical costumes domineering young naked girls, or human figures pulling off their own limbs.

The body is a leitmotif in Djurberg and Berg's artistic language. Not only as the hotbed of primary psychological impulses, but as a motive to be explored, torn apart and reassembled – a soft malleable substance in a constant process of transformation, of ripping open and gathering together, of entering and exiting. In *It's the Mother* (2008) infants literally crawl back into their mother's womb, later to re-emerge by popping out of her torso in fragmented form; in the sombre *Feed all the Hungry Little Children* (2007), a dozen underfed children in a slum town built out of sticks and corrugated paper flock around a heavily made-up lady, who feeds them by spraying thick cascades of milk from her breast into their little mouths, a grotesque living fountain of milk and clay.

Djurberg and Berg's work explores a boundless world where clay serves as a perfect metaphor for a mouldable human flesh, a world of transgressive desires where bodies and minds seem on the brink of disintegration, and where even tears are squeezed out of the eyes as thick, heavy lumps of clay. • Marie Laurberg

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Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg Born 1978, Lysekil, Sweden, and 1978, Rättvik, Sweden respectively. Both artists live and work in Berlin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – Wanås Konst, Knislinge, Sweden; Kunstraum Dornbirn, Austria; 2015 – 'The Secret Garden', Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia, and touring to Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Australia; and Shanghai 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum, China; 'ARoS Focus // New Nordic: Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg – Flickers of Day and Night', ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Performer/Audience/Mirror', Lisson Gallery, London; 'Naturally Obscure', Centre d'Art Passerelle, Brest, France; 'Love, Devotion and Surrender', 22 London, Asheville, North Carolina; 'Swedish Art: Now!', Sven-Harrys konstmuseum, Stockholm; 2015 – 'An Introduction', Fondazione Prada, Milan; 'Turn On: Time-Based Art from the Julia Stoschek Collection', Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; 'Yes We're Open', Gio Marconi Gallery, Milan.

Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg



↑ *It's the Mother*, 2008
Clay animation, digital video, stereo audio
6 min

↗ *I Wasn't Made to Play the Son*, 2011
Clay animation, digital video, stereo audio
6:27 min

→ *Worship*, 2016
Clay animation, digital video, stereo audio
8:06 min

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Lynda Draper's recent earthenware sculptures employ simple child-like motifs. Two holes for eyes, a nose shaped like a sausage. They are brightly coloured and have an economy of touch with a relaxed quality. We can think of the simplistic anatomical forms within children's cartoons as a particular touchstone. Limbs become malleable, and the face – portrayed as a series of dots and lines – can signify a complex personality from the barest of details. Draper's sculptures echo forms found in popular culture and the world around us. Take *Genie Bottle* (2015), with its overlong snout and numerous handles. Lime green and baby pink, it looks like a comic book version of the object. With its asymmetry and dimpled surface, it feels very bodily. The glazing amplifies the animate qualities of the material, embracing a certain fluidity, and one can imagine the sculpture suddenly moving into life.

In a series of works titled after female first names, the artist creates something that sits somewhere between a portrait and an architectural model. *Annette* (2012), with its igloo-like appearance and brightly coloured stones balanced precariously on top, raises more questions than it can answer. Is this a home? Perhaps this is a portrait of a friend? The work feels totemic, maybe it's a memorial? While implicitly biographical, the work is a piece of imagination, and beyond its evident materiality the artist seems to suggest something more spiritual. These are objects as fictional subjects. While they each have holes for eyes and wobbly noses, they have no mouths. Of course, objects only speak in fictional realms, but the lack of a mouth is telling. Draper embraces a certain reticence, and the eyes, typically seen as a window onto someone's soul, frustrate our reading yet further. They are hollowed out; the sculptures are vessels for our various projections.

In other sculptures, Draper embraces a more drawing-like aesthetic. *Pearly King* (2016), for example, which looks like a miniaturized helter-skelter or the vapour trails from a plane in the sky. They recall figures such as Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, who so avidly used the hole to punctuate the surface of their anthropomorphic works. The wiry lines in these works counter the opacity of the ceramics by introducing light and transparency. Our eyes dart around their surface, following the various lines of flight. Many of these pieces have what look like benign growths on them. One starts to think of moles and spots, or perhaps insects crawling across the surface. A modest blob starts to take on animal and human characteristics. Draper's assertive use of materials speaks of a confidence gained over the hard won battles of a thirty year career and just like a cartoon, her sculptures convey complex emotions from the most economical of means. • George Vasey

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Lynda Draper Born 1962, Sydney. Lives and works in Thirroul, NSW, Australia. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Gallerysmith, Melbourne; 2014 – Gallerysmith, Melbourne; 2013 – Firstdraft, Revisit, Sydney; 2010 – 'Home Altered', Shepparton Art Museum, Australia; 2010 – 'Home Altar', Gallerysmith; 2008 – 'Kangaroo', Gallerysmith; 2006 – Stella Downer Fine Art, Sydney; 2005 – Galerie Marianne Brand, Geneva. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Overundersidewaysdown', Manly Art Museum, NSW, Australia; 2016 – 'Weird Ceramic', Gippsland Regional Gallery, Victoria, Australia; 2015 – 'Sydney Contemporary', Carriageworks, Melbourne; 'Turn Turn Turn: The Studio Ceramics Tradition', National Art School, Sydney; 'Biggie Smalls', Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, NSW; 2014 – Loose Canon, Artbank, Sydney; 2013 – 'Home & Hosed', Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney; 'Terra firma: The Inquisitive Collector', Chapter House Melbourne.



ynda Draper

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← *Genie Bottle*, 2015
Earthenware and various glazes
60 × 27 × 35 cm
(23⅝ × 10⅝ × 13⅞ in)

→ *Pearly King*, 2016
Earthenware and various glazes
55 × 48 × 33 cm
(21⅝ × 19 × 13 in)

ynda Draper

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Wrapping paper, chocolate, stearin wax, steel, porcelain, nylon, plastic, wood, soap, bread, egg, glass, rubber and even Google – Rose Eken's works could be seen as an inventory of all the materials which lend themselves to a contemporary sculptural practice. However, in her work they are all transformed into clay. Rose Eken relentlessly creates an ever-expanding world of everyday objects, remodelled in paper clay. Her work lives in the tension between the mass-produced objects of everyday urban life and the dense materiality of her medium. Her concern is with the tactile workings of the production process and the expressive breath of clay – from lumpy, heavy earth to the elegance of the finest porcelain.

Rose Eken's sculpture and models are resolutely hand-made in a style which combines craftsmanship with a deliberately amateurish, DIY appearance. She finds inspiration in items of common culture, from ladders, brooms, lighters and sinks, to branded objects such as Coca-Cola bottles and a collection of Chanel make-up products – or a fully laid lunch table, as would be found in a traditionally oriented Danish family house, complete with open rye bread sandwiches, local liquor and Royal Danish porcelain.

Eken models her subjects on a scale of 1:1, but during the firing process each object shrinks by around ten per cent, a slight reduction in scale which the artist exploits in order to create a certain emotional tension. The change in scale is by no means dramatic enough to create the surreal estrangement found in the sculptures of Claes Oldenburg or the paintings of René Magritte, where a single apple might fill an entire room. The shrinkage in Eken's work is so slight as to be felt rather than seen, and its effect can best be described as a heightened intimacy: an invitation to move closer to the sculptures, many of which are small enough to fit easily into your pocket.

In some works this attention to objects assumes an anthropological dimension, as in *Tableau* (2015), in which Eken created a mash-up of the stereotypical artist's studio, based on material sent to her by fellow artists. Here you can find not just the MacBook, the dirty sink and the paintbrushes that would fit with any generalized idea of the studio, but also personal, one-off items such as Richard Coleman's coffee mug with the inscription 'Don't bother me, I'm crabby', Jonathan Meese's collection of children's musical boxes, or Michael Kvium's stuffed magpie, and an open packet of M&M's with its contents spilling out. This is a meta-work situated at the heart of Eken's field of interest: objects and the role they play in our lives. Her attention to specific detail distances her work from ideas of the 'general', focusing instead on a depiction of individual, lived life. The particular way the coffee has stained the sides of a dirty espresso cup, or a cigarette butt has been ground out inside a boiled egg. Such small sculptures are decidedly unmonumental. They present a portrait of cultural rituals and common culture through the objects that are intrinsically part of it: a poetics of everyday life modelled and served up in clay.
• Marie Laurberg

Rose Eken Born 1976, Copenhagen. Lives and works in Copenhagen. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – 'Bodegón', V1 Gallery, Copenhagen; 2017 – 'Come on in my Kitchen (working title)', Charlotte Fogh Gallery, Aarhus, Denmark; 2016 – 'CAN', V1 Gallery; 2015 – 'Tableau', V1 Gallery; 2014 – 'Remain in Light', The Hole Gallery, New York; 2013 – 'Murder One', V1 Gallery; 'Love is the Drug', Munch Gallery, New York; 2012 – 'Hit The Lights!', Unspeakable Projects, San Francisco. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Look at Me!' A curatorial experiment with the collection Hansen-Schmidt, Kupferstich-Kabinett der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen, Dresden; 'EN GROS', skulptur på Grønttorvet i Valby, Copenhagen; 2016 – 'Black/White'ish', Charlotte Fogh Gallery, Aarhus; 'No Man is an Island – The Satanic Verses', ARoS Museum of Contemporary Art, Aarhus; 'When The Darkness comes, It's all good', Varbergs Kunsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden; 'Love is the Drug', Unspeakable Projects, New York.



↑ *Painters Sink and Towel*, 2015
Glazed paperclay
Towel: 57 × 12 × 7 cm
(22 ½ × 4 ¾ × 2 ¾ in)
Sink: 39 × 33 × 19 cm
(15 ⅜ × 13 × 7 ½ in)

↗ *Vanitas with Dagger*, 2016
Glazed paperclay
40 × 35 × 20 cm
(15 ¾ × 13 ¾ × 7 ⅞ in)

↗↗ *Drinks Tray with Bottles*, 2016
Glazed paperclay
35 x 60 x 40 cm
(13 ¾ x 23 ⅝ x 15 ¾ in)

→ *Homage a Pollock*, 2015
Glazed paperclay
Installation of 22 elements
Variable dimensions

→→ Overleaf:
Remain in Light [detail], 2014
Glazed paperclay
Variable dimensions

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Rose Eken

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Alexandra Engelfriet's site-specific clay sculptures express the hard labour of their creation. Her anti-monumental work *Tranchée* (2013) is a fifty-metre (one-hundred-and-sixty-four-feet) long trench whose exposed interior walls are covered in thick clumps and furrows of fired clay. To make the work, Engelfriet lined a trench – which had been dug into the earth in Vent des Forêts, a sculpture park in Northeastern France – with clay brought in from off-site, and shaped it using her hands, feet, knees and elbows. Building an ad-hoc kiln around the trench, she then fired it over a number of days and nights, before dismantling the whole structure. The artist's action saw hunks of clay flying through the air, slapping into the trench walls, her limbs ploughing and furrowing, her body sliding down the banks; afterwards, a fire blazed, leaving behind sloped walls of gnarled red-and-black ceramic.

Clay can become an index of the maker's presence: the memory of a body, the slap of flesh on wet mud, the ooze of displaced matter. Yet most indexes of human presence are temporary – think of the proverbial warm breath on a cold windowpane, or the footprint on a sandy beach. Engelfriet's earlier work often invokes these entropic or ephemeral qualities, fusing together contemporary performative ceramic practices with the heritage of Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s. *Tracks in the Flats* (2002), for example, is a work she made in the mudflats of Waddenzee in the Netherlands: she crawled, pushed and struggled across the mud, leaving a human trail that was soon washed away by the tide. Nothing remains, except a video capturing the event. *Under Ground* (2016) is a hollow filled with sixty tons of clay in the De Oude Warande park, Netherlands, which Engelfriet sculpted using a digger as well as her own body. She has left the work unfired, offering it as a mutable site to be shaped by weather and time.

Clay is also a sign of something beyond the artist's body. It inevitably evokes an ancient lineage of human endeavour, from ancient pottery to adobe huts and space-age ceramics. *Tranchée*, for example, visually and materially evokes the trenches of World War II that still scar the region of France in which it is located – lending the work itself an aspect of mourning and memorialization. On the other hand, Engelfriet's use of trench kilns to fire clay evokes both ancient practice and contemporary innovations in ceramics (she learnt the technique from ceramic artists Torbjørn Kvasbø and then Thiébaut Chagué). Her work plays with histories of labour, craft and discovery. She has even experimented with pouring molten glass into wet clay (*Glassporen*, 2016) – a relatively dangerous process that results in chaotic, amorphous floes and shattered fragments of glass. Engelfriet's work is investigative; each new endeavour brings about an act of material and symbolic discovery.
• Colin Perry

Alexandra Engelfriet Born 1959, Leiden, Netherlands. Lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Gulgong Clay' in 'Clay Gulgong Ceramics Festival', Australia; 'Under Ground – 60 tons of clay, a digger, a body', in 'Luster – Clay in Sculpture Today', Fundament Foundation, Tilburg, Netherlands; 2015 – 'Glassporen – Molten glass meets raw clay' in 'Drawing', National Glass Centre, Sunderland, UK; 2013 – 'Tranchée', Le Vent des Forêts, Fresnes-au-Mont, France; 'Sonorité d'argile/Sound of clay', La Briqueterie, Ciry-le-Noble, France; 2011 – 'Dust to Dust', Punt WG, Amsterdam; 'Reclaim', University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia; 2009 – 'Marl Hole', British Ceramic Biennial, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Axis Mundi', Centre d'Art Contemporain Frank Popper, Marcigny, France; 2016 – 'CONT(A)CT EARTH', First Central China International Ceramics Biennale, Henan Museum, China; 'La Terre Paysage – Paysages subjectifs', Keramis–Centre de la céramique, La Louvière, Belgium; 2015 – Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale 2015, South Korea; 'Taking Form: Quality in Clay', James Harris Gallery, Seattle; 'Keramiske Veje 30 År', Museum Sophienholm, Denmark; 2011 – 'Lerets Magi-Keramik i international samtidskunst', Museum Gammel Holtegaard, Copenhagen; 2010 – 'Contemporary glass and ceramics: From Peter Bremers to Betty Woodman', Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

lexandra Engelfriet





† *Under Ground – 60 tons of clay, a digger, a body*, 2016
Raw Dutch river clay
280 × 1,400 × 1,800 cm
(110 × 551 × 708 in)
Part of 'Luster – Clay in Sculpture Today' exhibition, Fundament Foundation at park De Oude Warande, Tilburg, Netherlands
17 Sept–30 Oct 2016

→ *Tranchée*, 2013
21 tons of earthenware clay, wood fired
230 × 300 × 1,000 cm
(90 ½ × 118 × 393 in)
Le Vent des Forêts, France

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Fang Lijun is known for his involvement as a painter in the Cynical Realism movement in China during the 1990s. His practice explores, through wit and dark humour, the frictions between the individual versus the masses within the legacies of Chairman Mao's (1892–1976) Socialist Revolution in the post-Mao era. As well as painting, he has worked extensively in woodblock printing and, more recently, has returned to ceramics, a discipline he studied while at the Hebei School of Light Industry in the 1980s.

Fang's painting is well known for being illustrative and wry, however his ceramic interests verge towards the esoteric. In his recent ceramic sculptures, such as *2013.7.29* (2013) and *2015* (2015), he creates architectonic structures made of stacked, lightly glazed bricks. Inside each piece he places small cubes of polypropylene, a thermoplastic polymer. Seeking states of entropy, he then fires the clay while wet; as the clay swells the plastic cubes melt, adhering the forms together. During this process, the instability of the wet clay, which is now a hollow form, creates unique defects that merge material and process with content and meaning.

Fang's reference to utilitarian structures begins with a certain symmetry, creating patterns and forms reminiscent of the built environment. However, any rigid design is then disturbed during the firing process when the hollowed bricks shift and sink under their own weight, as in the toppling white sculpture *2015* (2015). Though the resulting works may be unpredictable, they are not considered failures, but happy accidents of a material in flux. Often flesh or bone in colour, Fang adds little embellishment. Such austerity emphasizes substance, texture and negative shapes, creating ghostly, formal investigations that also serve as a meditation on Chinese society.

Fang's work has long reflected on the State's manipulation of the masses in order to control society through political ideologies and capitalist aspirations. The choice of an unconventional firing technique, of a purposefully flawed approach, allows for individual, random results that break away from the regular, even oppressive, nature of their initial design. The fragility of the material itself, now hard and brittle, thus suggests a fraught relationship between the system and the individual as seen in *2014* (2014) where the artists inserts the form of a human head inside one of his falling structures. By using the physical properties of his chosen medium as a site of formal and intellectual experimentation, exploiting the enigmatic qualities of clay in varying states of collapse, Fang Lijun continues his exploration of the complexities of Chinese identity. • Eva McGovern-Basa



Fang Lijun Born 1963, Handan, Hebei Province, China. Lives and works in Beijing. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Fang Lijun – Forbidden areas', Ariana Museum, Geneva; 'Re-sensing Fanglijun', Hubei Art Museum, China; 2013 – 'Fang Lijun – A Cautionary Vision', Palazzo Marcello, Venice; 2012 – 'The Precipice Over The Clouds', Galleria Civica di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea Torino, Italy; 2009 – 'Endlessness of life: 25 Years Retrospect of Fang Lijun', Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan; 'Fang Lijun, Sea and Sky', Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany; 2008 – 'Living Like A Wild Dog 1993–2008 Fang Lijun's Archive', Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Recent Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'M+SIGG Collection: Four Decades of Chinese Contemporary Art', Aris Tree, Hong Kong; 2015 – 'CHINA 8 – Contemporary Art from China on the Rhine and Ruhr', Rhine Ruhr, Germany; 'Fragmentary Narratives', Stanford Art Gallery, US; 2014 – 'Post Pop: East meets West', Saatchi Gallery, London; 2012 – 'Go Figure! Contemporary Chinese Portraiture', National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia and touring to Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney; 'Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

↑ *2013.7.29*, 2013
Ceramic
8 × 10.8 × 7.5 cm
(3⅛ × 4¼ × 2⅞ in)

↗ *2015*, 2015
Ceramic
113 × 105 × 92 cm
(44½ × 41¼ × 36¼ in)

→ *2015*, 2015
Ceramic
44.5 × 41.5 × 42 cm
(17½ × 16¼ × 16½ in)

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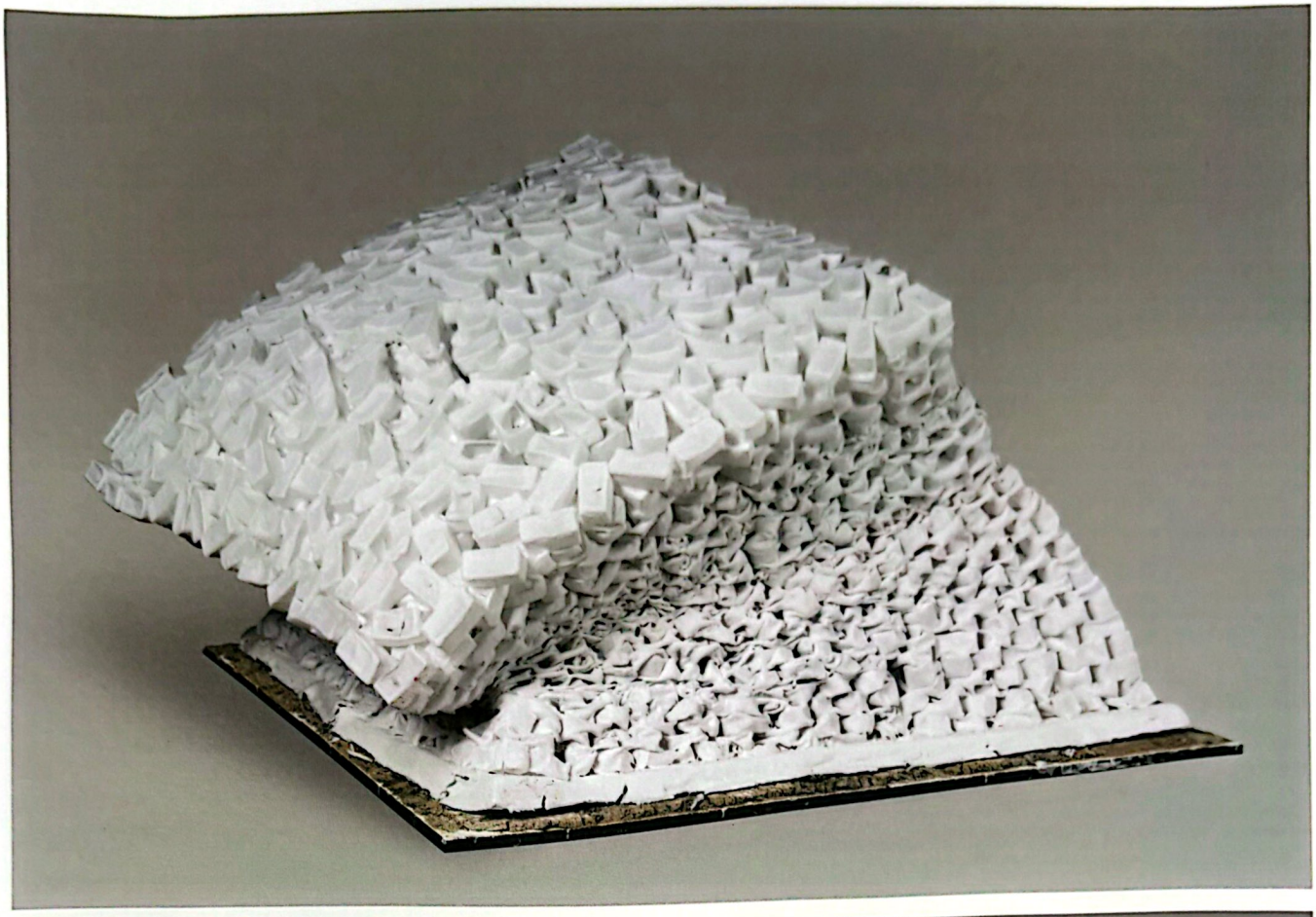

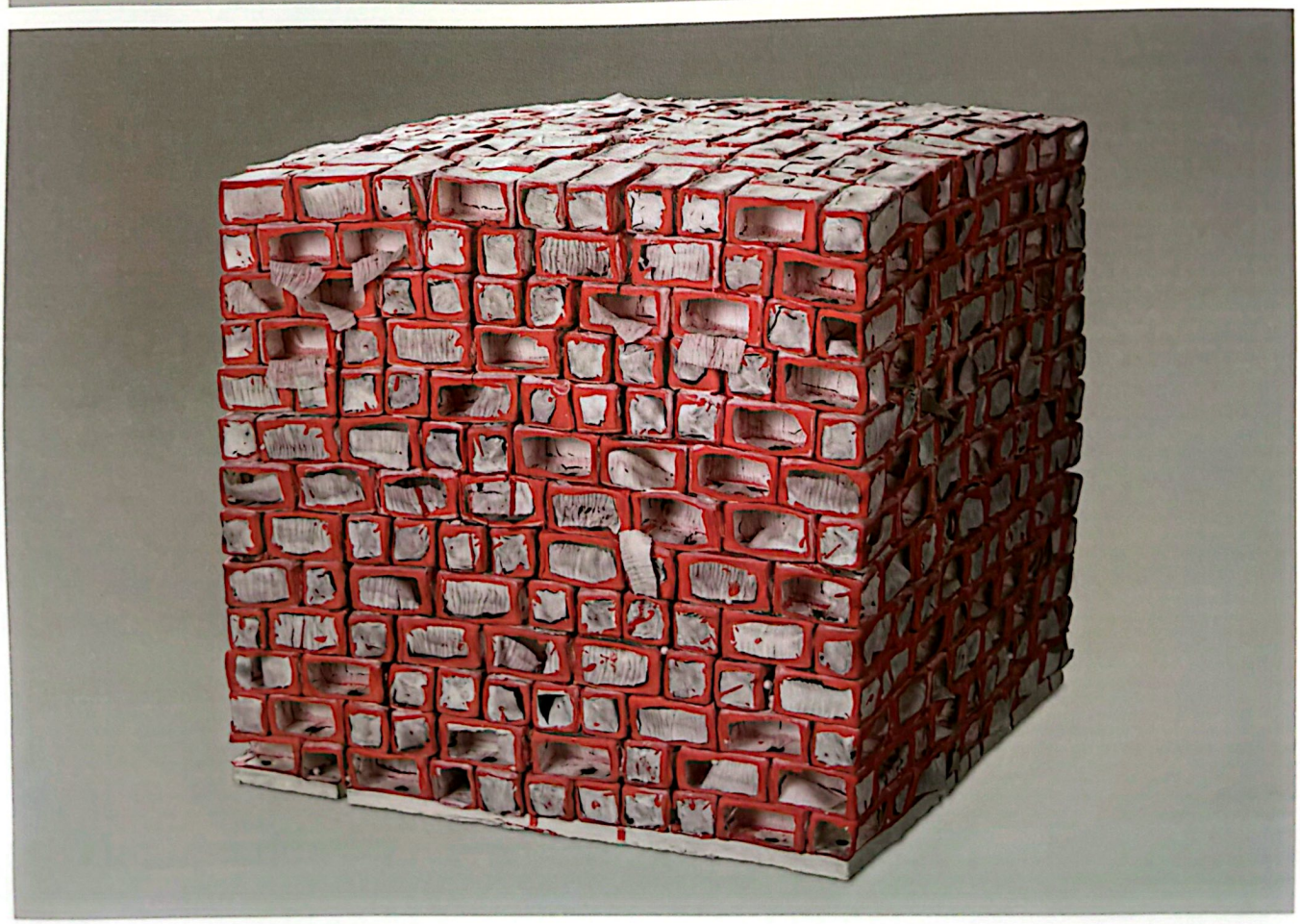

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Eons stretch, contract and collapse together in the sculptures of the Syrian artist Simone Fattal, whose rudimentary renditions of figures, homes and objects seem as ancient as the clay they are made from, yet as present-day as the enduring truths of myth and scripture they evoke. Often lumpen and ungainly on first appearance, like archaeological finds freshly brushed of dirt, they unfold with sustained looking to reveal references from across geographies and timeframes – though always tethered to the past. 'For me, this history is a continuum,' she has said. 'The archeology of 3000 BCE is very present in my mind, in my psyche. It's my history.'

Born in Damascus and raised between there and Lebanon, Fattal studied philosophy in Beirut and Paris, returning to Beirut in 1969 to embark on a career as a painter. In the early 1970s she met the artist and poet Etel Adnan, who became her studio mate and lifelong partner. In 1980 they fled Beirut and settled in California, where Fattal put aside painting to start a small experimental feminist imprint called Post-Apollo Press. Eight years later, she returned to art – this time making the ceramic sculptures for which she is now known.

Clay, as a material redolent of antiquity, is foregrounded in Fattal's sculptures, which often invoke the fabled personae of ancient texts, from the Quran to Sufi writings to the story of Gilgamesh and other epics of the Middle East and Mediterranean alike. Her humanoid figures, such as *Homme portant un animal (Man Holding an Animal)* (2008) are distinguished by their legs, some spindly as candlesticks and others of elephantine girth, that form an archway at their groin; sometimes they are further characterized by semi-formed heads, rude breasts, drooping phalluses or handbag-like handles. Animal-like totems also make an appearance, as do architectural forms, from vernacular housing of the kind you see at archaeological sites to cultic structures and arrangements of freestanding bricks. Embedded within these sculptures, however, can be references as farranging as the Venus de Milo or Italian Futurism.

Fatal, who has also cast sculptures in bronze, is similarly attuned to the fractured politics of today's Middle East. In a 2016 show at the Sharjah Art Foundation, one painting with Arabic text reading 'The rain will always be made with bullets' (a line from one of Adnan's poem) was conjoined with another listing Palestinian towns that have been destroyed by Israel. Also in the show were large clay spherical sculptures inscribed with the ninety-nine names of Allah; another sculpture in bronze and terracotta titled *Gaza* (2008) recalls bones at the bottom of a broken urn.

Today Fattal resides between Sausalito and Paris and continues to run the Post-Apollo Press, which over three decades has published some sixty titles. In 2013 she released an avant-garde memoir of sorts in the form of a film, *Autoportrait* (1971/2012), which has been screened in international film festivals. Featuring footage from her early days as an artist in Beirut stitched together with broader filmic elements, it is a multifaceted reflection on her career. • Andrew Goldstein

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Simone Fattal Born 1942, Damascus, Syria. Lives and works in Paris. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Simone Fattal: Standing Figures', Kaufmann Repetto, Milan; 'Sharjah Biennial 13', Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates; 2015 – 'Simone Fattal: Sculptures and Collages', Balice Hertling, Paris; 2014 – 'Simone Fattal', Galerie Tanit, Beirut; 2012 – 'Simone Fattal', Galerie Ivana de Gavarny, Paris; 2011 – Espace Kettaneh-Künigh, Beirut; 2010 – 'Simone Fattal', Europia Gallery, Paris; 2010 – The Pottery, San Rafael, CA (occurring every year since 2001). Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2015 – 'Take me I'm yours', La Monnaie de Paris, Paris; 'Nel Mezzo del mezzo', Palermo, Italy; 'Heartland – Territoire d'a_ect', Beirut Art Center; 2014 – 'Here and Elsewhere', New Museum, New York; 'Meeting Points 7: Ten thousand wiles and a hundred thousand tricks', Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium, and touring to Beirut Art Center; Wiener Fiestwochen, Vienna; Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo; Para Site, Hong Kong; 2013 – 'Champs Elysées', Palais de Tokyo, Paris.



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Reine du monde
ueen of the world), 2011
ıy
× 35 × 35 cm
¼ × 13¾ × 13¾ in)

ıle I, 2011
ıy
× 30 × 47 cm
¾ × 11¾ × 18½ in)

mme portant un animal
Man holding an animal), 2008
lay
9 × 45 × 20 cm
27¾ × 17¾ × 7¼ in)

Reine de Tyr
Queen of Tyre), 2008
ılazed ceramics
5 × 70 × 40 cm
21¼ × 27½ × 15¾ in)

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Over the past six decades, working independently and together, Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess have produced an extraordinary body of work. Combining classical forms with a Pop sensibility, their painted ceramics reconcile the Hellenic virtues of harmony and proportion with the spirit of energy and hybridity that vitalized post-war American culture.

Their collaboration *Popeye Pot* (2010) is reminiscent in its shape of a Greek vase, an effect reinforced by the ornamental border and pastoral motifs painted on the neck. Yet the two-tiered frieze that runs around its belly does not depict a symposium, boar hunt or battle from the Trojan War. Instead it celebrates the feats of a more recent mythological hero, with scenes from the comic book *Ghost Ship to Treasure Island* (1967) showing Popeye the Sailor Man socking it to a sea monster. Here, Popeye's victory reads like an alternative version of Odysseus' encounter with Scylla, the contemporary rendering of an enduring narrative form.

That creative intermingling of styles and eras lends the Frimkess's work its particular power. *Popeye Pot* reminds us that cartoon strips are the closest contemporary equivalent to the friezes that decorated the pots of antiquity. So what seems at first like a disruption of the tradition – a post-modern collision of high and low culture – is revealed as closer to a faithful continuation of its essential principles. Our era is inclined to look for dramatic breaks in history and unbridgeable chasms between cultures; works such as *Pre-Columbian Pot* (1972) and *Katsina and Minnie Sung Bowl* (2001) preach a doctrine of interaction and play between eras and civilisations.

Early on in his career, Michael Frimkess was quick to declare his allegiance to the Greek and Chinese potters of antiquity. In the context of mid-century California this was unfashionable, even perversely iconoclastic, and may have contributed to his neglect by the fine arts community. He nonetheless persisted in mastering the ancient technique of dry throwing, which makes possible the thin walls and lissom forms that are a feature of his pots. As the symptoms of Michael's multiple sclerosis progressed, from his diagnosis in 1970, his wife Magdalena took on the role of painting the vessels that he throws, bringing to them her own genius for storytelling and eye for the play of colour.

Magdalena's career as a sculptor was for a period subsumed into Michael's, though in recent years she has resumed her own work. The source material for her works ranges from the Chilean comic strip character Condorito to paintings from canonical art history and images of family life. *Jazz Head Cup* (2001) embodies the vibrancy of her ceramics and paintings. It shows a portrait of a coy girl, lips pressed into a heart-shaped pout, her curls crowned by a frieze of dancing cartoon characters. They are dancing to the tunes coming from Mickey Mouse's saxophone, the instrument – perhaps not coincidentally – that her Charlie Parker-worshipping husband has played every day since he was a teenager. • Ben Eastham

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Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess Born 1929, Caracas, Venezuela, and 1937, Los Angeles, respectively. Both artists live and work in Venice, Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess: New Stoneware', South Willard, Los Angeles; 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Paul Swenbeck', Adams and Ollman, Portand, Oregon; 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', Kauffman Repetto, New York; 2016 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, kaufmann repetto, Milan; 'Michael and Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', South Willard; 2015 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess | New Works', South Willard; 2014 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', White Columns, New York; 'Michael And Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', South Willard; 2013 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', South Willard; 2012 – 'Michael and Magdalena Suarez Frimkess', South Willard. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, Kelly Marie Conder, Bella Foster', South Willard; 2015 – 'The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra And Its Legacy', Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; 'Looking Back /The 9th White Columns Annual', White Columns, New York; 2014 – 'Selected By Michael Marriot and Jesse Wine', Limoncello, London; 'Another Cats Show', 356 Mission, Los Angeles; 'Made In LA 2014', UCLA Hammer Museum; 2013 – 'Grapevine', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.



↑ Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess
Pre-Columbian Pot, 1972
Stoneware and glaze
48.3 × 27.9 × 27.9 cm
(19 × 11 × 11 in)

↗ Magdalena Suarez Frimkess
Jazz Head Cup, 2001
Stoneware and glaze
15.2 × 12.7 × 12.7 cm
(6 × 5 × 5 in)

↗↗ Michael Frimkess
Maquette, 1972
Stoneware and glaze
20.3 × 15.2 × 15.2 cm
(8 × 6 × 6 in)

→ Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess
Katsina and Minnie Sung Bowl, 2001
Stoneware and glaze
12.7 × 27.9 × 27.9 cm
(5 × 11 × 11 in)

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess and Michael Frimkess

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For Theaster Gates art provides fertile ground for social, political and cultural transformation. Gates's multi-dimensional practice encompasses gallery objects, installations and paintings, as well as large-scale urban renewal projects, live performances and music. Situated at the intersection of art and everyday life, his approach combines an awareness of, and respect for, history, infused with personal nuance. Constructed from repurposed objects and materials associated with trade and industry – pegboard panels, bricks, roofing tar, canvas strapping, wooden crates, even a cut-up and rearranged school gymnasium floor – individual artworks are infused with a sense of the past, and there is a quiet dignity to their forms.

Gates has turned to the history and materiality of his native city in realizing his (ongoing) neighbourhood transformation, *Dorchester Projects*. Aimed at revitalizing one of the poorest, predominantly black communities on the South Side of Chicago, Gates purchased and renovated vacant, dilapidated buildings, converting them to an Archive House, Listening House, Black Cinema House and more. The sites are publicly activated through talks, screenings, listening sessions and workshops.

Gates's exhibition practice feeds in and out of his public projects, juxtaposing objects, histories and personal narratives. Viscous black paintings made with tar and rubber recall his father's profession as a roofer, and his own youth assisting him in the holidays. Other works employ clay to create textural, monochromatic vessels and urns, as well as figurines and stacked brick sculptures. Described by Gates as his 'first love', ceramics featured early in his practice, as objects and in performances; more recently he has produced large ceramic vessels and stylized figurines that he describes as 'knock offs'. Gates's references are varied, from Japanese ceramics to the distinctive stoneware of David Drake, a nineteenth-century African-American potter and slave from South Carolina.

Gates's first public exhibition in 2007 was expanded by live performances based on the fictitious narrative of a Japanese ceramicist called Shoji Yamaguchi who had fled Hiroshima, settled in Mississippi, and married an African-American civil rights activist. In Gates's narrative, the couple were known for their 'Plate Convergences' or dinner-party salons featuring Southern cuisine, served on dinnerware made by Yamaguchi. For the performances, Gates served soul food to guests on ceramic plates that he fabricated using materials and techniques from Itawamba County, Mississippi. The plates were then exhibited along with video documentation and other ceramic objects.

Gates's later ceramics take the form of stand-alone objects and vessels. Presented upon reclaimed wooden crates and blocks, the pots are varied in scale, encompassing rounded vessels with narrow necks and more elongated, jar shapes. Tar, roofing underlay and cotton straps ornament the surface of some vessels, while others are more minimal in finish. Black and white ceramic figurines suggest mass-produced, faux-tribal artefacts and bear visible moulding lines, yet each is individually wrought with its own distinctive features. A solitary white figurine standing upon a peg-board column, *Conqueror* (2015) juxtaposes modernist art history and Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* with the notion of the ready-made object. Past and present histories resonate in the works, with their fusion of references and personal symbolism.
• Rachel Kent

Theaster Gates Born 1973, Chicago. Lives and works in Chicago. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; IHME Festival, Helsinki; 2016 – 'How to build a house Museum' Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; 'True Value', Fondazione Prada, Milan; 'Black Archive', Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria; 2014 – 'The Black Monastic', Museu Serralves, Porto; 2013 – '13th Ballad, MCA Chicago; 2011 – 'Theaster Gates: The Listening Room', Seattle Art Museum; 'An Epitaph for Civil Rights, MOCA, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Colour Line,' Musée du quai Branly, Paris; 2015 – 'All the World's Futures', 56th Venice Biennale; 2014 – 'When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South', Studio Museum Harlem, New York, and touring to NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and ICA Boston; 2013 – 'Prima Materia', Punta della Dogana, Venice; 2012 – '12 Ballads for Huguenot House', dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany.

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ster Gates



↑ *White Brick Sculpture*, 2014
Metal, clay bricks and automotive paint
170.2 × 61 × 61 cm
(67 × 24 × 24 in)

→ *Covered vessel*, 2015
Glazed clay, tar and asphalt roofing membrane
Vessel: 93 × Ø 39 cm
(36¾ × Ø 15⅜ in)
Pedestal: 91.5 × 40.5 × 39 cm
(36 × 15¾ × 15¾ in)

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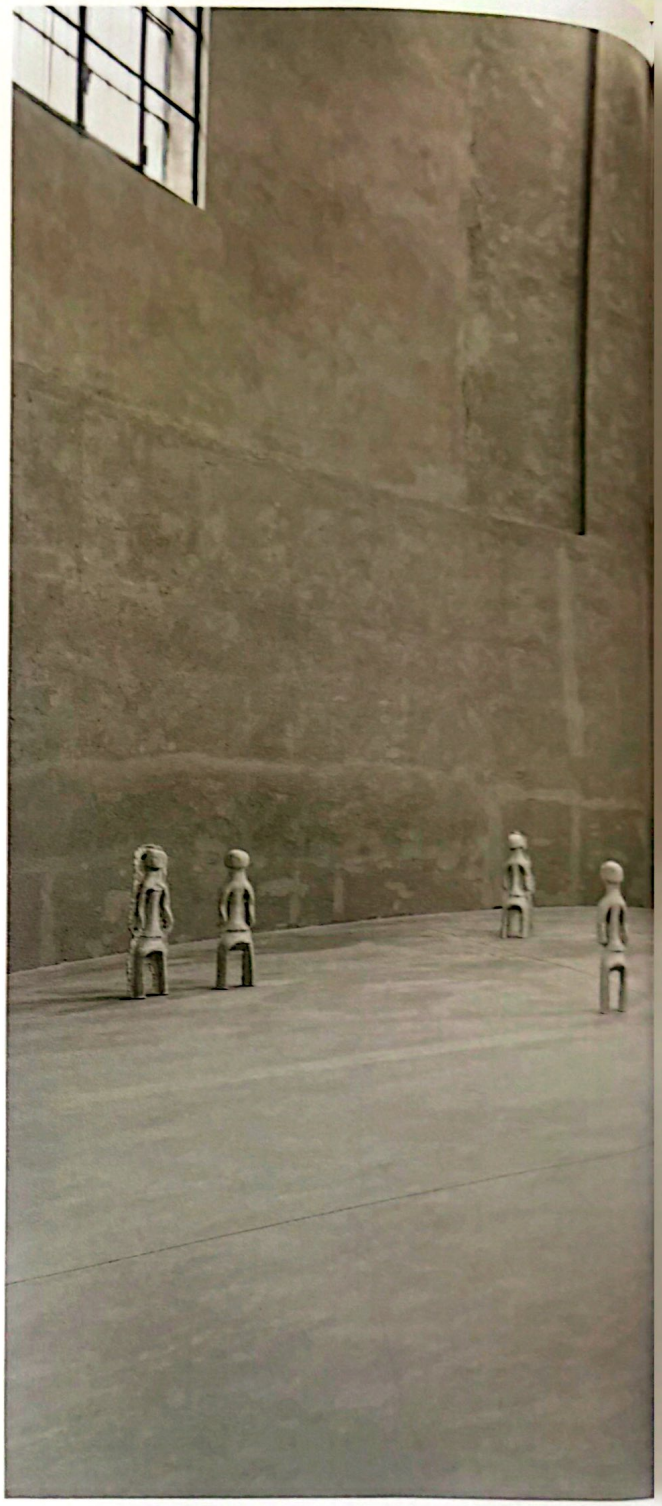

cer Gates

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↖ Conqueror, 2015
Wood, glazed clay and metal
Installed dimensions:
258.5 × 27 × 27 cm
(101¾ × 10⅝ × 10⅝ in)

↑ Installation view, 'Theaster Gates: True Value' exhibition, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2016

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Giles Round and Phil Root founded The Grantchester Pottery in 2011 at Wysing Art Centre, near Cambridge, UK. Their works are the result of a collaborative production process and are meticulously designed and handmade. Ceramic objects are often presented within a visual arts context: bold designs, block patterns, colours, marks and gestures expand across hand-painted objects, onto walls and across multiple surfaces, like a large-scale, carefully constructed still life or series of vistas.

Their ceramic objects are drawn from a lexicon of forms allowing experimentation with painting and finishes. Recent experiments can be seen in their series of 'ACID TEST' (2016) works, made during their ceramic residency at Camden Arts Centre, London. Importance is placed on the unique object and the associated making process: the handling of the clay, consideration of the form, colour of the palette and glaze finish. This is in contrast to the mass-produced objects that dominate contemporary living.

Under the guise of a semi-fictional decorative arts cooperative, Round and Root collaborate to produce a range of functional objects, exhibitions, clothing, publications and photographs through a number of offshoot companies – fictive constructs that provide a tangible strategy to explore conceptual concerns such as the production, display and associated economies of art and craft and the role of aesthetic taste. In prioritizing the handmade unique object, which they position within this context of their fictional companies such as The Grantchester Tailor's Guild or The Grantchester Free Press), The Grantchester Pottery considers how a contemporary visual artwork can be produced and sold outside typical curatorial or market structures.

The Grantchester Pottery is influenced by historical working models such as Roger Fry's Omega Workshops Ltd, Eduardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson's Hammer Prints Ltd, and the Art & Literature group, which included Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others, who regularly met in the village of Grantchester near Cambridge. These groups prioritized a collective approach to the construction of works and dissemination of ideas, believing that artists should design, make and sell their own work and that writers could create and produce their own publications.

The Grantchester Pottery takes a similar approach to production and enlists a cohort of makers, artists, writers, photographers, scriptwriters, filmographers and, more recently, their Ikebana teacher, to feed into ideas and co-author designs, sketches and works. A ceramic object may have been designed and physically made by several makers and shaped by many hands. This working practice allows the collaborators the freedom to adapt, change and incorporate new decisions from one project to the next in a continually evolving process. By incorporating different individuals, they exchange and learn new skills and ideas, enabling a freedom of making and a fluidity of design that never stays static and continues to progress in different shapes and guises. Within this process, the use of clay provides a tangible material that allows for conceptual ideas surrounding authorship, meta-modernism (a set of developments in philosophy, aesthetics and culture emerging from and reacting to post-modernism) and, more widely, the discussion and dissemination of issues surrounding the production of arts and crafts. • Sarah Williams

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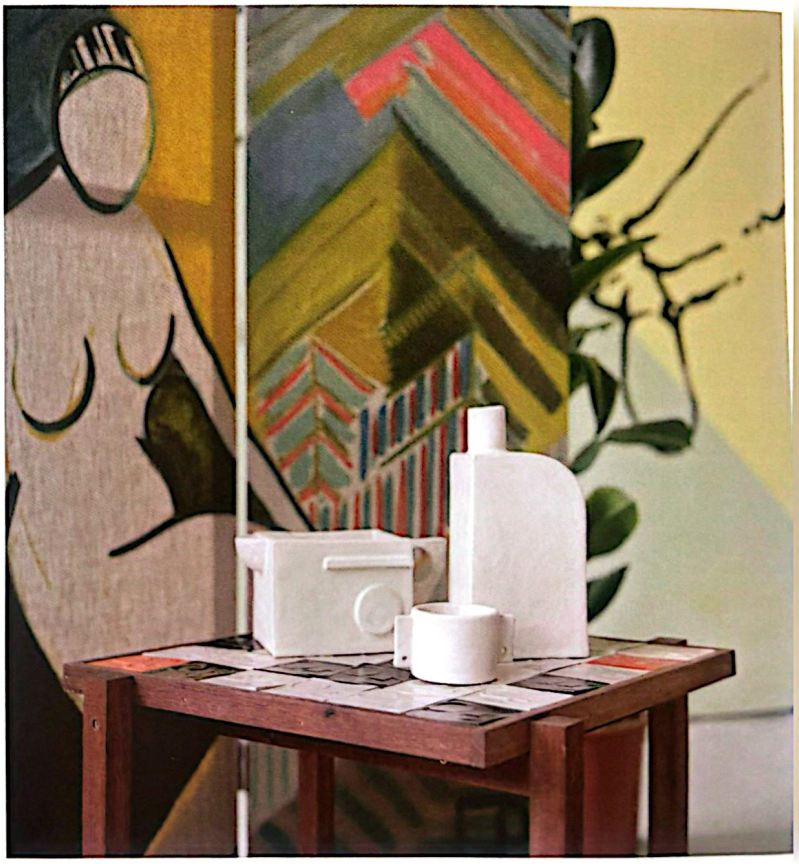
The Grantchester Pottery Established 2011, Cambridgeshire, UK. Lives and works in Bristol, UK, and London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Grantchester Photographic Society', Camden Arts Centre, London; 2015 – 'The Grantchester Pottery paints the stage', Jerwood Space, London; 2013 – 'Zero Hours', Art Sheffield Biennial, UK; 'ARTIST DECORATORS', ICA, London; 'Studio Wares', David Dale, Glasgow; 2012 – 'Décor', ROWING, London; 'Grantchester Ices', Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Lucy Raven: Edge of Tomorrow', Serpentine Galleries, London; 'Folly: A Group Show', Emalin, Dunmore, Scotland; 2015 – 'The London Open 2015', Whitechapel Gallery; 'Finite Project Altered When Open', David Dale, Glasgow; 2014 – 'The Influence of Furniture on Love', Wysing Grange, Cambridgeshire, UK; 'Pleasure, Devotion, Balance', Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK

The Grantchester Pottery





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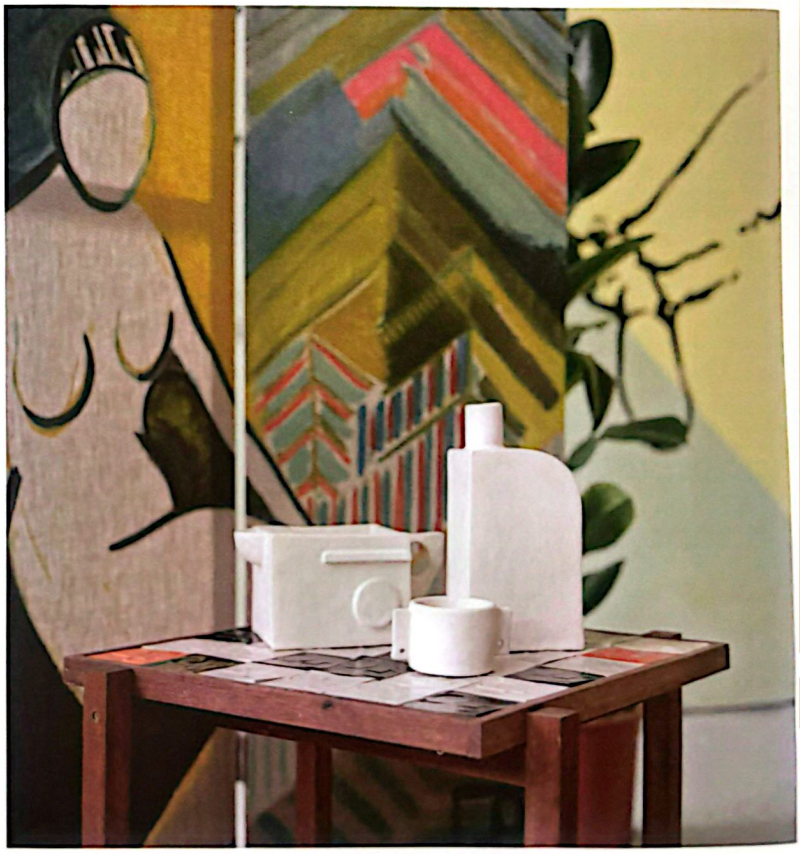
The Grantchester Pottery Established 2011, Cambridgeshire, UK. Lives and works in Bristol, UK, and London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Grantchester Photographic Society', Camden Arts Centre, London; 2015 – 'The Grantchester Pottery paints the stage', Jerwood Space, London; 2013 – 'Zero Hours', Art Sheffield Biennial, UK; 'ARTIST DECORATORS', ICA, London; 'Studio Wares', David Dale, Glasgow; 2012 – 'Décor', ROWING, London; 'Grantchester Ices', Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Lucy Raven: Edge of Tomorrow', Serpentine Galleries, London; 'Folly: A Group Show', Emalin, Dunmore, Scotland; 2015 – 'The London Open 2015', Whitechapel Gallery; 'Finite Project Altered When Open', David Dale, Glasgow; 2014 – 'The Influence of Furniture on Love', Wysing Grange, Cambridgeshire, UK; 'Pleasure, Devotion, Balance', Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK

The Grantchester Pottery





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Installation views, 'Studio Wares' exhibition, David Dale Gallery & Studios, Glasgow, 2013

Overwhelmed by emotion. She lost control, 2016
Glazed stoneware, hemp cord, stainless steel fixings and tears
Variable dimensions

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Hilary Harnischfeger sources her clay in Ohio – where she lives part of the year – the state's natural deposits dating back millennia. If we can say for sure where Harnischfeger gets her clay from, however, it's a lot harder to say what she does with it.

One of her first steps is dyeing. Unlike traditional ceramics, which tend to be tinted and glazed only on the surface, Harnischfeger insists the colour on hers be infused throughout, applying stains to her clay before throwing. After that step, though, her process can vary widely. Combining ceramics with, in no particular order, paper, plaster, pyrite, quartz, chalcedony, textiles and much else besides, Harnischfeger isn't a ceramicist in any way Josiah Wedgwood would have understood. She's a multi-disciplinary artist very much in the twenty-first-century mould, using clay as just one of many materials.

This is reflective of shifts in art education in recent decades, away from specialist, craft-based learning; and of shifts in society more generally, access to the Internet having made knowledge more broad and less thorough.

On this broad spectrum of materials Harnischfeger carries out a range of activities: from pigmenting, baking, glazing and incising, to carving, casting, wedging and mortaring. She says she has limited idea, at the outset, of how she wants each work to look. But it's the end result that counts: an end result that is often rough-edged but uncannily compelling. The conventional sculptor's notion of finish doesn't apply here. Some works make us wonder whether we are encountering fledgling monsters, or even rock formations. Harnischfeger's titles occasionally offer some clue – we realize the striped, multicoloured patterns of clay in *Harlequin* (2015) represent the stock servant character in *Commedia dell'arte*, once we learn what the work is called. Elsewhere, however, the relationship between name and sculpture is less obvious: how does *Chandigarh* (2015) capture the essence of the Indian city designed by Le Corbusier? Other than that whole urban environments appear, at times, tucked away within, and peeping out from, Harnischfeger's creations.

Harnischfeger can be considered to be at the cutting-edge of contemporary ceramics, and yet her work is so ragged and jagged it's the antithesis of the digital, and obviously not made by a machine. Sometimes it hangs on walls, at other times it rests on pedestals – which is to say it flits, in impression, between bas-relief and sculpture. It often veers towards abstraction, but with hints of the real world, always reminding us of something. Perhaps that's thanks to the clay itself and its fleshy sense of corporeality. • Alastair Smart





Hilary Harnischfeger Born 1972, Melbourne, Australia. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Hilary Harnischfeger', Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York; 2014 – 'East Coast Crush', Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, New York; 2013 – 'Visiting Artist Series', American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC; 2012 – 'Hilary Harnischfeger and Tommy White', Front Gallery, Houston; 2011 – 'Hilary Harnischfeger', Rachel Uffner Gallery; 2009 – 'Hilary Harnischfeger', Rachel Uffner Gallery; 2008 – Neverwork, New York; 'The Split Wall', South First Gallery, New York; 2001 – 'Ni Chomei', Moody Gallery, Houston. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Flat Fix', CODE Art Fair, Copenhagen; 'Repeat Pressure Until', Ortega y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn, New York; 'Convene', Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS; 'Gallery Artist Group Show', Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York; 'Physical Painting', Richard & Dolly Maass Gallery, SUNY Purchase, New York; 2015 – 'Refuge', 1 Hotel South Beach, Miami Beach; 'Rock hound Swap Meet', Junior Projects, New York; 'Hard and Soft', ACME Gallery, Los Angeles.

Hilary ' 'eger

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Chandigarh, 2015
Ceramic, paper, Hydro-Stone, pigment, paper, oil stick, Herkimer diamond, wood
58.4 × 45.7 × 25.4 cm
(23 × 18 × 10 in)

Introduction, 2015
Ceramic, steel
63.5 × 22.9 × 22.9 cm
(25 × 9 × 9 in)

Chandigarh, 2015
Ceramic, paper, Hydro-Stone, pigment, paper, oil stick, Herkimer diamond, wood
58.4 × 45.7 × 25.4 cm
(23 × 18 × 10 in)

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Jessica Harrison's art is rooted in long-standing research into the body and how our shared understanding of inhabiting a particular form shapes our experience of the world and objects that surround us. Harrison undertook a practice-based PhD at the University of Edinburgh (2013). Central to her research and thesis was how to break away from 'a dominance of the figure over the body in sculptural practice', something that involved looking closely at the relationship between the exterior and interior spaces of the body.

While predominantly working with clay, Harrison also utilizes found objects, paper, fabric and stone within her practice. Many of Harrison's works represent women, however the work is less about body politics and more about the formal, conceptual readings of the skin. Moving away from the traditional idea of skin as boundary, she proposes a pervasive model in which the surface of the skin becomes a mode for thinking and looking.

Harrison has experimented with glaze techniques on appropriated Royal Doulton figurines, altering their surfaces and allowing all trace of their former 'skin' to be overridden by the new glazes she applies. This process can be seen in works such as *Royal Doulton Figurine Happy Anniversary HN4606 – MIB* (2016). She also made a series of similar figures out of bone china – such as *Sarah HN3978* (2016) – the first time that she had worked with clay from scratch, in its raw format.

Things from the V&A (2016) is the first part in a series for which Harrison has remade historic objects from the ceramics collection of London's Victoria & Albert Museum, a choice that originates from her fascination with objects that you cannot touch or see (she studied the objects in books and on the Internet rather than first-hand). Vessels have been remade in porcelain, as quickly as possible, using basic hand-coiling techniques that she learnt as a child, and handled until the point of near collapse. The speed and unrestrained gestures involved in recreating these pieces are crucial elements of Harrison's work. The process of their making bears no relationship to the originals, most of which have been cast from plaster moulds, or meticulously built by a skilled hand. By pushing the physicality of clay through this exaggerated bodily process, and allowing errors and measured mistakes to occur, Harrison draws attention to the relationship between how objects and collections are made, viewed and understood in times dominated by paper catalogues and online searches.

Harrison's more recent works such as *Jasperware vase and cover with Pegasus finial and with reliefs of Apollo and the Muses, made at the factory of Josiah Wedgwood, Etruria, Staffordshire, c.1790* (2016) use speed and intuition to find their forms. In these, she applies a model of thinking *through* the body in order to generate alternative ways of thinking *about* the body. The choice of material, the delicate nature of the porcelain, draws parallels to the fragile nature of the human body. It is through this tactile use of clay that Harrison's works offer alternative ways of looking at materials and bodily forms, thus asking us how we might reimagine traditional definitions of the body and our relationship to objects and space. • Sarah Williams



† *Jasperware vase and cover with Pegasus finial and with reliefs of Apollo and the Muses, made at the factory of Josiah Wedgwood, Etruria, Staffordshire, c.1790*, 2016
Porcelain, celadon glaze
54 × 26.5 × 25 cm
(21 × 10 ½ × 10 in)

↗ *Painted Lady (14)*, 2015
Found ceramic, enamel paint
21.5 × 16 × 14.5 cm
(8 ½ × 6 ½ × 5 ½ in)

↗↗ *Royal Doulton 'Lynne' Figurine*, 2016
Found ceramic, glaze
19 × 16.5 × 15 cm
(7 ½ × 6 ½ × 6 in)

→→ *Royal Doulton Figurine Happy Anniversary HN4606 – MIB*, 2016
Found ceramic, glaze
22.5 × 17 × 12 cm
(9 × 6 ½ × 4 ½ in)

→ *Sarah HN3978*, 2016
Bone china
21 × 17 × 16.5 cm
(8 × 6 ½ × 6 ½ in)

Jessica Harrison Born 1982, St Bees, UK. Lives and works in Edinburgh. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Pink, Green, Blue and Black', Galerie LJ, Paris; 2014 – 'Broken', Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh; 'FLASH', Galerie LJ; 2011 – 'Broken', 2011, Jealous Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – Jerwood Makers Open, Jerwood Visual Arts, London; 2016 – 'Open Storage', Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop; 'Sexy Ceramics', Keramiekmuseum Princesshof, Leeuwarden, Netherlands; 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2015 – 'Dismaland', The Tropicana, Weston-super-Mare, UK; 'SWEET 18', Kasteel d'Ursel, Antwerp, Belgium; 2014 – 'Body & Soul: New International Ceramics', The Museum of Art and Design, New York; 2011 – 'Industrial Aesthetics: Environmental influences on recent art from Scotland', Hunter College, New York.

Jessica Harrison

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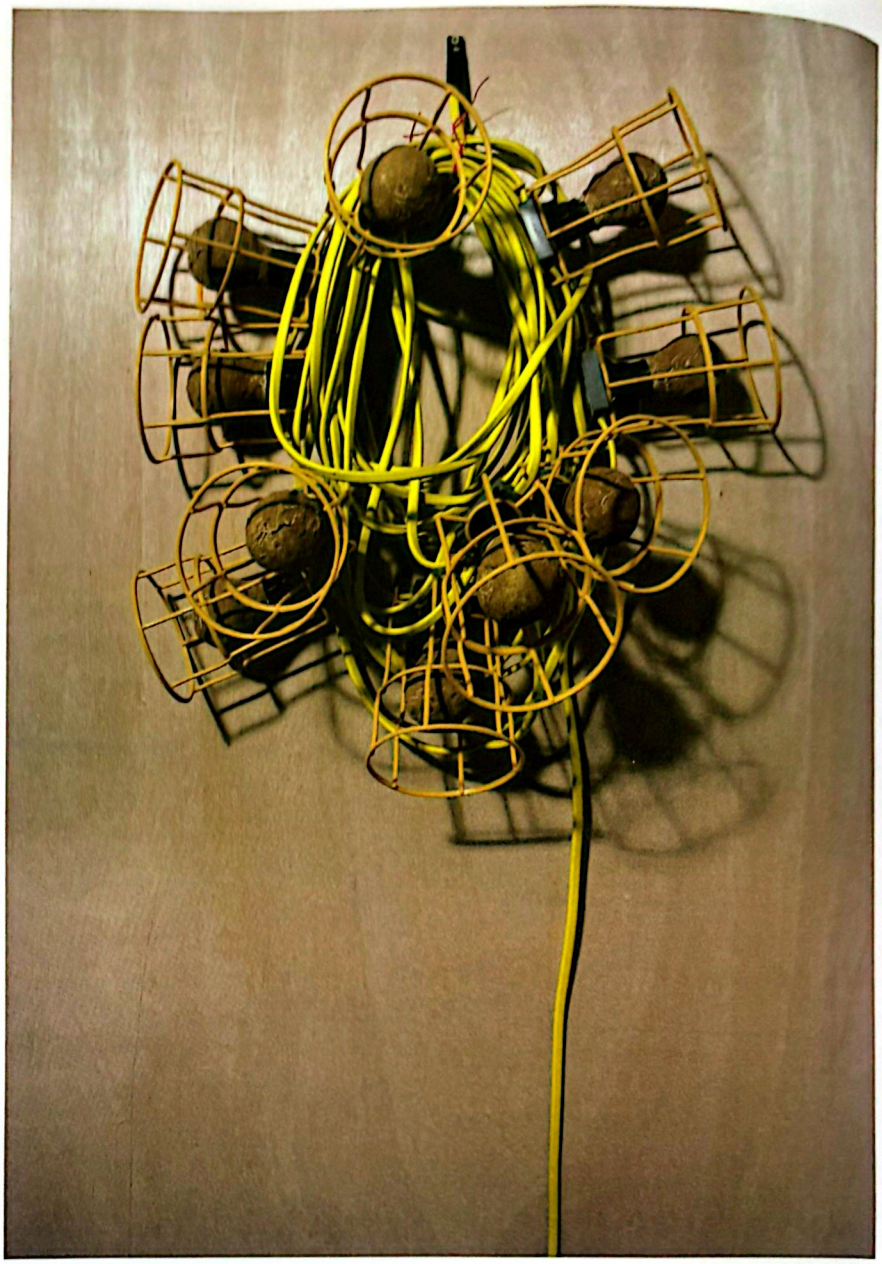
Keith Harrison frames his work as a catalyst for live processes and areas of practice not commonly associated with ceramics. He says: 'I am interested in what happens when you activate a material. This sense of switching on, or making a material live ... has connotations back to music and performance in a broad sense. I always want to see what a material can do when you put it under duress.' Like any experimental approach – in say physics and engineering, or cultural disciplines including music, dance or architecture – controls are loosened and elements staged in relation to each other precisely to amplify contingency, test limits and produce unexpected results.

Many of Harrison experiments with clay involve its transmutation from a liquid or plastic state into a fixed solid form: 'I often use another object as a host to hold the clay, whether it be a light bulb, a sound system, or an electrical heating element, and then explore how the host's properties interact with the clay once you send an electrical current through it.' His sculpture *Wreath* (2013) is a string of building site light bulbs coiled up and hung on a hook, resembling an industrial chandelier. Each bulb has been dipped in terracotta slip mixed with Prinknash Abbey 'basilica' incense. When switched on, the bulbs fire the clay which cracks to reveal an incandescent glow, and the molten incense extrudes as a glaze, dripping onto a plastic shield which in turn starts to smoulder, the smells of incense and melting plastic forming a sweet but putrid mix. This object can be presented in its 'raw', 'live' or 'cooked' state, each proposing different potentials and relationships to risk and conservation.

Ceramics have been used by many artists to queer normative gender stereotypes, and a number of Harrison's projects focus on groups associated with non-conformist masculinities at the margins of society, including skaters, joyriders and grindcore music fans. During his residency at London's Victoria & Albert Museum, he drew analogies between the potter's wheel and the DJ's turntable culminating in an installation with two decks, one playing a record by grindcore band Napalm Death, the other a clay disc, the two mixing seamlessly to create white noise. This led to *Bustleholme* (2013), a sound system Harrison built and covered in ceramic tiles, which Napalm Death then 'performed'. Of the project, Harrison has said: '*Bustleholme* brought such an unusual mix of people together, it was somewhere between a social experiment, a happening, and a gig. There were grindcore fans, art-world people, and local audiences which created a tension in the piece that was only released when a Napalm Death fan climbed over and started kicking the sculpture to bits, then others got involved as well. No one anticipated this level of social interaction and participation, I think they expected something more dramatic that wasn't in the piece, so they started to create their own drama.'
• Ben Borthwick

Keith Harrison Born 1967, West Bromwich, UK. Lives and works in Plymouth, UK. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Joyride', Jerwood Visual Arts, Cannock Chase Forest, UK; 2015 – 'Heavy Rock | Plymouth Sound', KARST, Plymouth, UK; 'Mute', National Museum Wales, Cardiff, UK; 2015 – 'Tombstone (let's get over this)', Just Ramps, Bilston, Dynamix, Gateshead and Prime Skatepark, Plymouth, UK; 2013 – 'Bustleholme: Napalm Death and Keith Harrison', De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK; 'Moon: a public demonstration', Hochauser Auditorium, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; 2012 – 'Circulation', Victoria & Albert Museum; 2012 – 'Lucie Rie vs Grindcore' Victoria & Albert Museum and Royal College of Art, London; 2010 – 'Blue Monday/White Label', Landmark, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Jerwood Open Forest', Jerwood Visual Arts, London; 'Material Language', New Art Centre, Salisbury, UK; 2015 – 'Editions', KARST; 'Super Woofer' Matt's Gallery and X Marks the Bökship, London; 'Fragile?', National Museum Wales, Cardiff; 2015 – 'Acts of Making', Bilston Craft Gallery and touring in the UK to Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead; Plymouth City Council and Plymouth College of Art; 2014 – 'Conversations', Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada; 2013 – 'Endogenous II', Maria Stenfors, London; 'Sound Matters', touring to multiple venues in the UK.

Harrison



↑ *Wreath*, 2013
Clay, five spice powder, light bulbs, electrical equipment
Variable dimensions
c.40 × 70 × 30 cm
(c.15¾ × 27½ × 11¾ in)

↗ *Mute*, 2015
Clay, ceramic tiles, plywood, steel, two turntables, adapted vinyl records
720 × 360 × 100 cm
(283½ × 141¾ × 39⅜ in)

→ *Bustleholme* (with Napalm Death), 2013
Ceramic, clay tiles, wood, electrical sound equipment
800 × 320 × 120 cm
(315 × 126 × 47¼ in)
Installation view at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK

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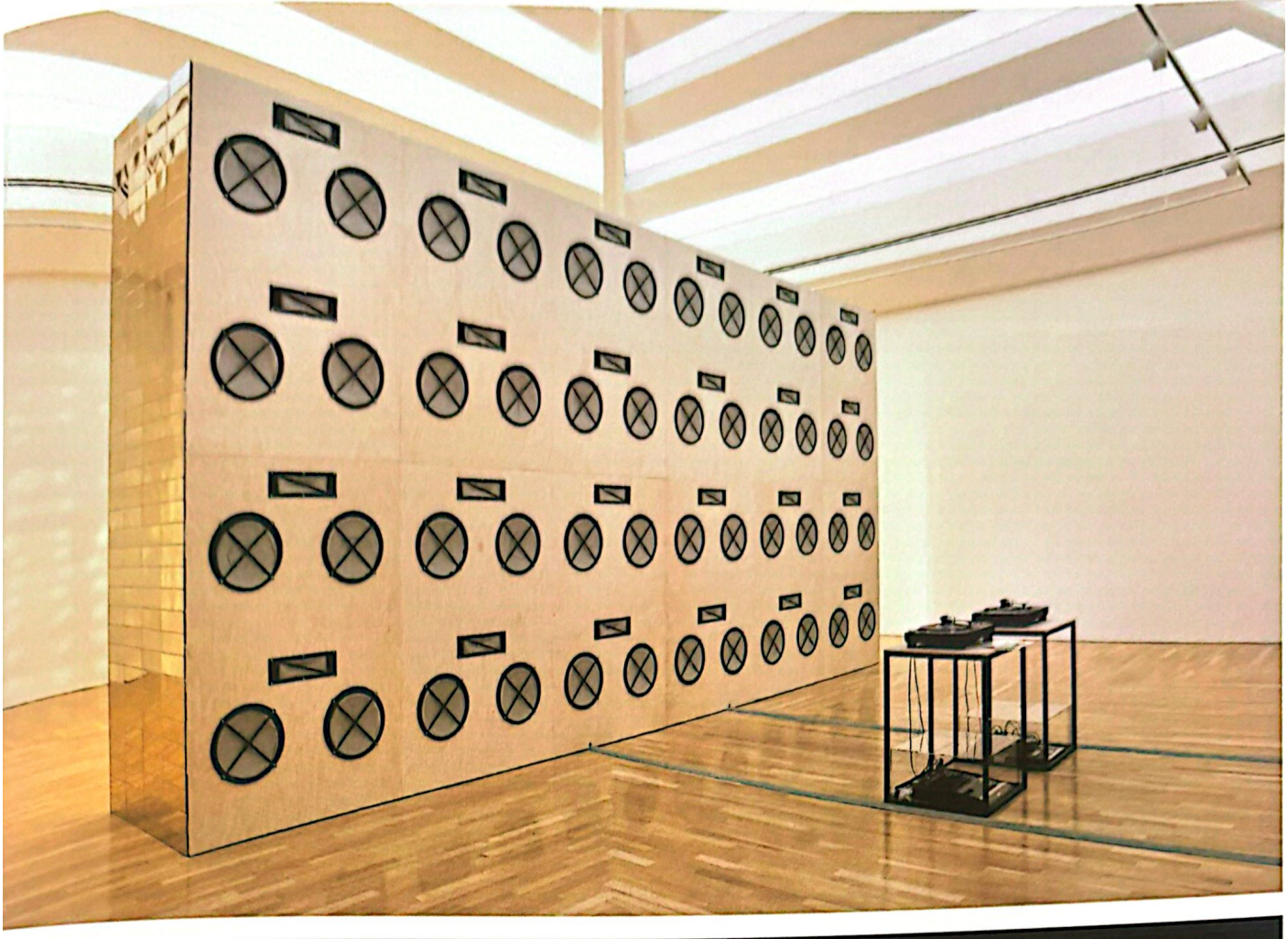



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'I realized that clay could be an exciting way for me to talk about mess or chaos: all the stuff photography protects us from,' said Emma Hart in an interview for *The New York Times* in 2016. Her decision to begin working with clay marked a turning point in her practice, which had up until that point focused on the use of still and moving digital images, often displayed as part of installations and performances. Her perception of photographs as smoothed-down versions of the world presented a challenge: to reintroduce the messiness of life into and through the image, with sounds, phrases and words that interrupted themselves and images that overlapped each other.

The literal mess of clay, with its dust and liquidity and physical presence, adds to Hart's attempts to bring the confusion of the outside world into the gallery space. The first of the clay objects that she produced, in 2012, was a tongue. Describing them in an interview at Camden Arts Centre in London in 2013 as 'a kind of juncture of public and private', these objects have reappeared in her ceramic work ever since, along with other body parts – arms, feet, ponytails – that exist independently of any complete figure. They are perhaps best described as appendages; corporeal references that, within her installations, are given a function that can be structural and narrative. In *The Pits* (2014) a group of arms extend from the floor, working as rickety supports for trays of wonky wine glasses teetering on the brink of collapse. In *Dirty Looks* (2013) tongues act as door stops, drawer handles and napkin holders, obscuring or revealing printed digital images or flat screen monitors.

Images are also applied to slabs of clay, as in the surfaces of the trays in *The Pits* (2014), or across unfurling sheets that cascade from the wall in *Low Ink Buy More* (2015). Hart takes advantage of the weightiness of this medium to force images into the space next to us, cracking and folding and collaging themselves into our line of sight. A half-open door in *Lockers* (2015) reveals a close-up of a face, and a mirror that will also reflect the viewer's own in similar proximity. A series of photographs applied to clay tablets or clipboards in *The Private Eyes* (2014) are visible only through the reflections caught by teardrop-shaped eyes hung on the wall above them.

Ceramic forms only a part of Hart's installations, which operate as stage sets that must be navigated by the viewer, and which encourage a playful search for the origin of sounds that emanate from the bottom of drawers or for videos reflected in car wing mirrors. They are imbued with narratives that emanate from Hart's own experiences (in a call centre, at a seaside Punch and Judy show, at a bar, celebrating the dissociation and exhilaration of having a child). Nevertheless, her use of clay, whether as a tongue or otherwise, provides the 'juncture' between the image, the object and our bodies.

• Rebecca Lewin





Emma Hart Born 1974, London. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; The Sunday Painter, London; ChertLüdde, Berlin; 2017 – 'Mamma Mia!', Whitechapel Gallery, London, and touring to Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; 2016–17 – 'Love Life: Act 1. Emma Hart and Jonathan Baldock', Peer, London, and touring to The Grundy Arts Centre, Blackpool, UK; De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, UK; 2014 – 'Giving It All That', Folkestone Triennial, UK; 2013 – 'Dirty Looks', Camden Arts Centre, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2018 – 'Hot Pot', Kunsthaus Hamburg, Germany; 2017 – 'An ear, severed, listens', ChertLüdde, Berlin; 2016 – 'Sticky Intimacy', Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff; 'Notes on Boredom', The Living Art Museum, Reykjavik; 2015 – 'London Open', Whitechapel Gallery, London; 2014 – 'Hey I'm Mr. Poetic', Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK.

Emma Hart

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Boo Hoo Boob Tube, 2016
Glazed ceramic
50 × 40 × 20 cm
(11⅞ × 15¾ × 7⅞ in)

BANG, 2016
Ceramic, wood stain, archival varnish
50 × 50 × 7 cm
(19⅝ × 19⅝ × 2¾ in)

From left to right:

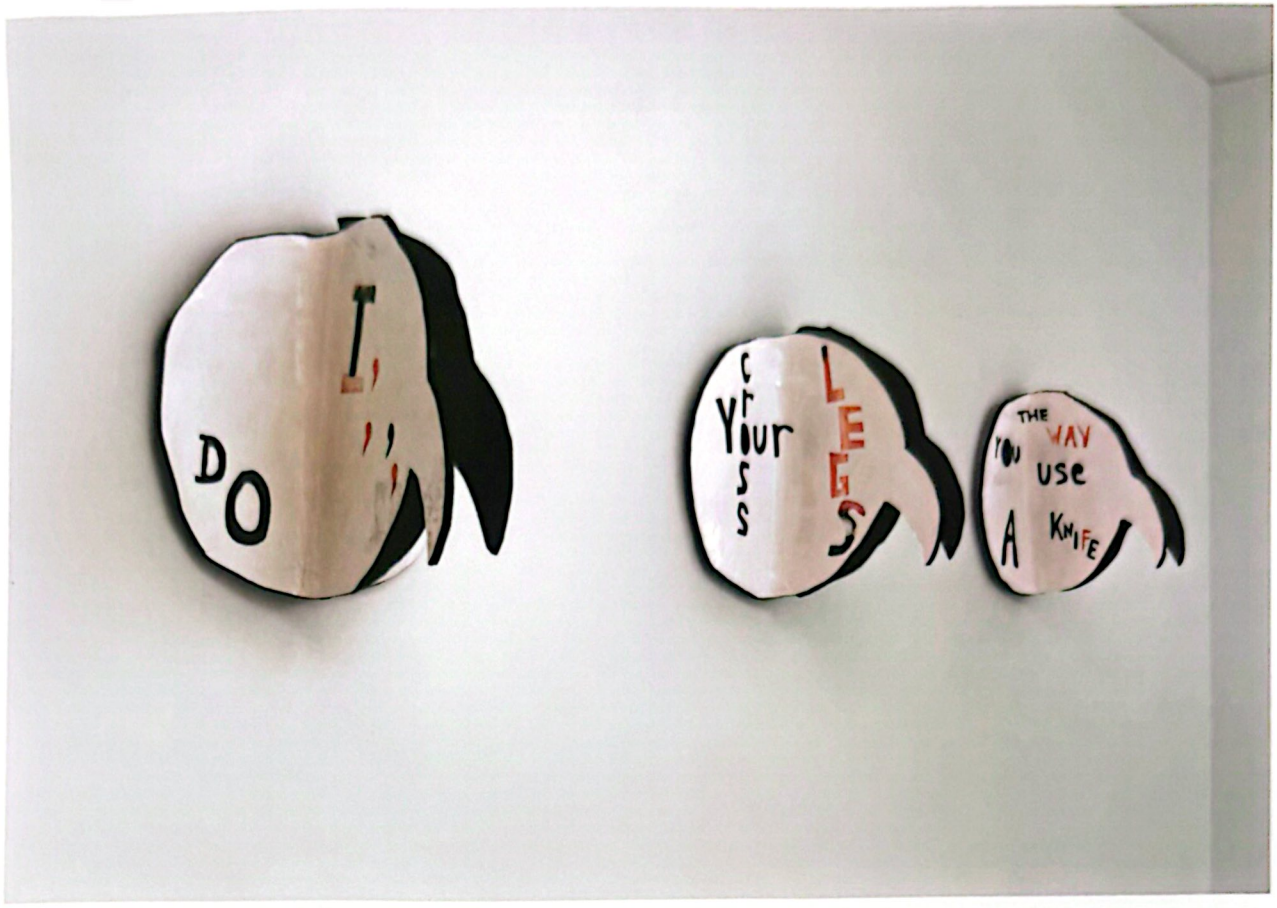
You Two Faced Lying Mother Fucker (What For), 2016

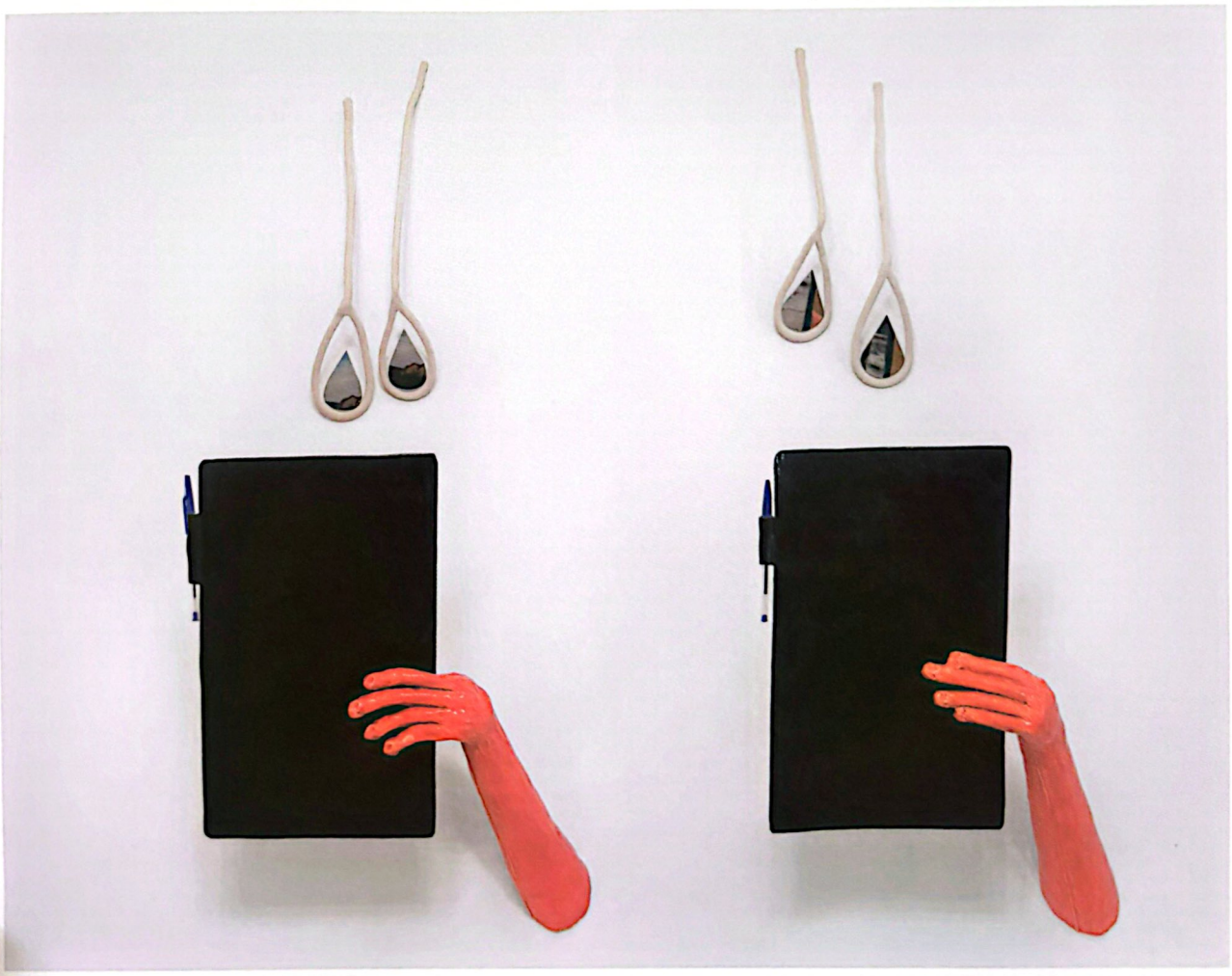
You Two Faced Lying Mother Fucker (Nice Things), 2016

You Two Faced Lying Mother Fucker (Sooo Long), 2016

Glazed ceramic, ceramic digital decal, tile paint, plywood split baton
Each: 50 × 55 × 45 cm
(19⅝ × 21⅝ × 17¾ in)

The Private Eyes [detail], 2014
Ceramic, archival ink decal image, metal and mirror
90 × 50 × 35 cm
(35⅜ × 19⅝ × 13¾ in





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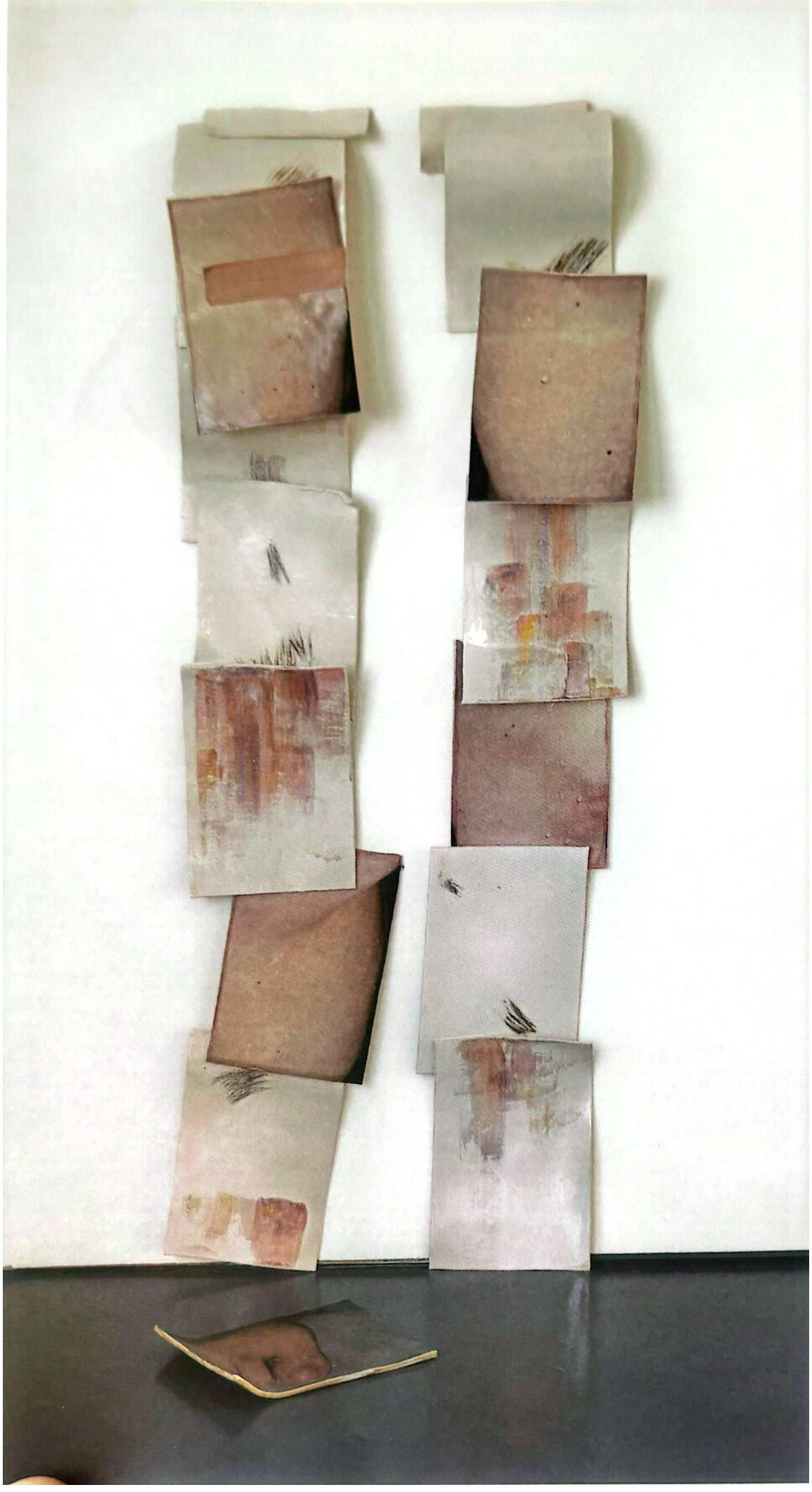

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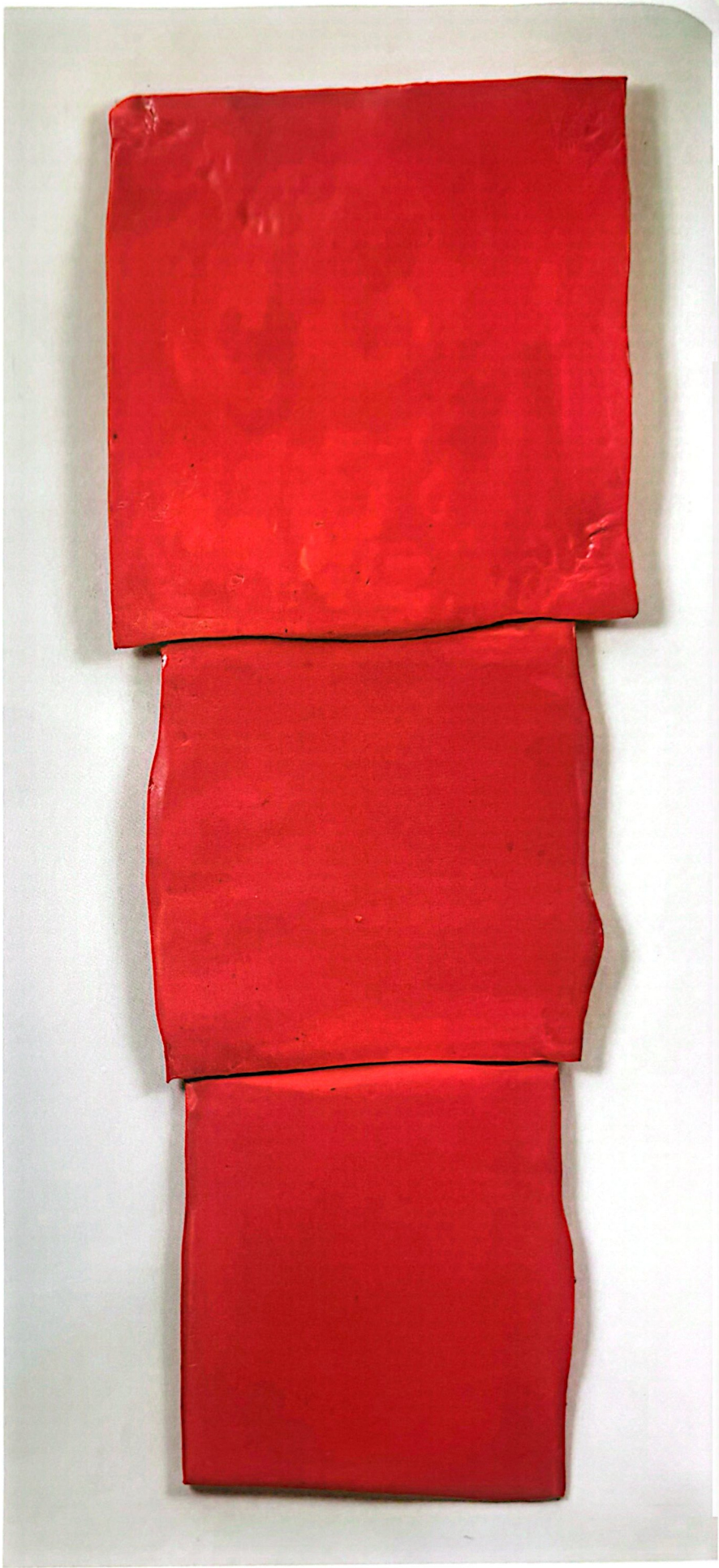
The title of Mary Heilmann's *Pink Ocean, Black Wave* (2015) alerts us to the fact that this stepped pink ziggurat and ragged black triangle is not, or not only, a work of abstract art. It is also a landscape, taking inspiration perhaps from the Pacific Coast where Heilmann spent her childhood. Thus what at first appears to be an airless exercise in form and colour might be read as a paean to surf culture, the sense of energy embodied in the exuberance of the wave, which spills uncontainably over the edges of the ocean. The abstract is revealed to be not only figurative, but gestural and allegorical.

Heilmann began her career as a Californian ceramicist before moving to New York in 1968, where she found a macho culture dominated by minimalism. Illustrating the independent streak that characterizes her practice, Heilmann introduced herself to Robert Smithson as a painter – deeply unfashionable in those circles – to provoke an argument, and then started working as one. The consequence was that her ceramic work took a back seat to her painting, but the inclusion of several in a retrospective of her work at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 2016 suggested that they were worthy of reappraisal. The brightly coloured, quasi-abstract ceramics on show were characterized by a quality that in a person is called charisma. If they were at a party, you would engineer an introduction; after an hour in their company, you feel reinvigorated.

Heilmann's trick has been to put the stripped-down visual grammar of minimalism, a style so drastically reductive as to appear nihilistic, to the service of a romantic imagination. *Red Metric* (2015) describes three stacked squares of gradually increasing size, which aligns it with the principles of repetition and regularity that are the cornerstones of minimalism. But its lines are cockeyed and the squares wobble and bulge, looking defiantly handmade. The shattered almost grid of *Fracture* (2011) is shaped not by the artist but instead by forces that, like the titular earthquake, are beyond human control. Where minimalism imposes regular forms, Heilmann embraces the momentary and unpredictable in her materials and process.

This devotion to chance, as well as Heilmann's trademark wit, is apparent in *Fontana* (2015), a light turquoise tile marked by a thin crack at its centre. The imperfection calls to mind the slashed canvases of Lucio Fontana's 'cuts' paintings, but the contrast between their premeditated violence and the playful serendipity and surprise of Heilmann's work could not be more stark.
• Ben Eastham

Mary Heilmann Born, 1940, San Francisco. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Mary Heilmann: Looking at Pictures', Whitechapel Gallery, London; 2015 – 'Geometrics: Waves, Roads, etc.', 303 Gallery, New York; 'Sunset', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 'Two by Two: Mary Heilmann & David Reed', Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; 2013 – 'Mary, Blinky, Yay! Mary Heilmann and Blinky Palermo in a Dialogue', Kunst Museum Bonn, Germany; 'Mary Heilmann, Another Green World', Häusler Contemporary, Munich; 2012 – 'BACA 2012: Mary Heilmann: Good Vibrations', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands and touring to Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany; 'Visions, Waves and Roads', Hauser & Wirth, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Splotch', Sperone Westwater, New York; 'Henkel – The Art Collection', Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; 2015 – 'Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age', Museum Brandhorst, Munich; 'Geometries On and Off the Grid: Art from 1950 to the Present', The Warehouse, Dallas; 'Works on Paper', Greene Naftali, New York; 2014 – 'Reductive Minimalism: Women Artists in Dialogue, 1960-2014', University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor; 'Paintings on Paper', David Zwirner, New York; 'The Shaped Canvas, Revisited', Luxembourg & Dayan, New York.



Mary Heilmann

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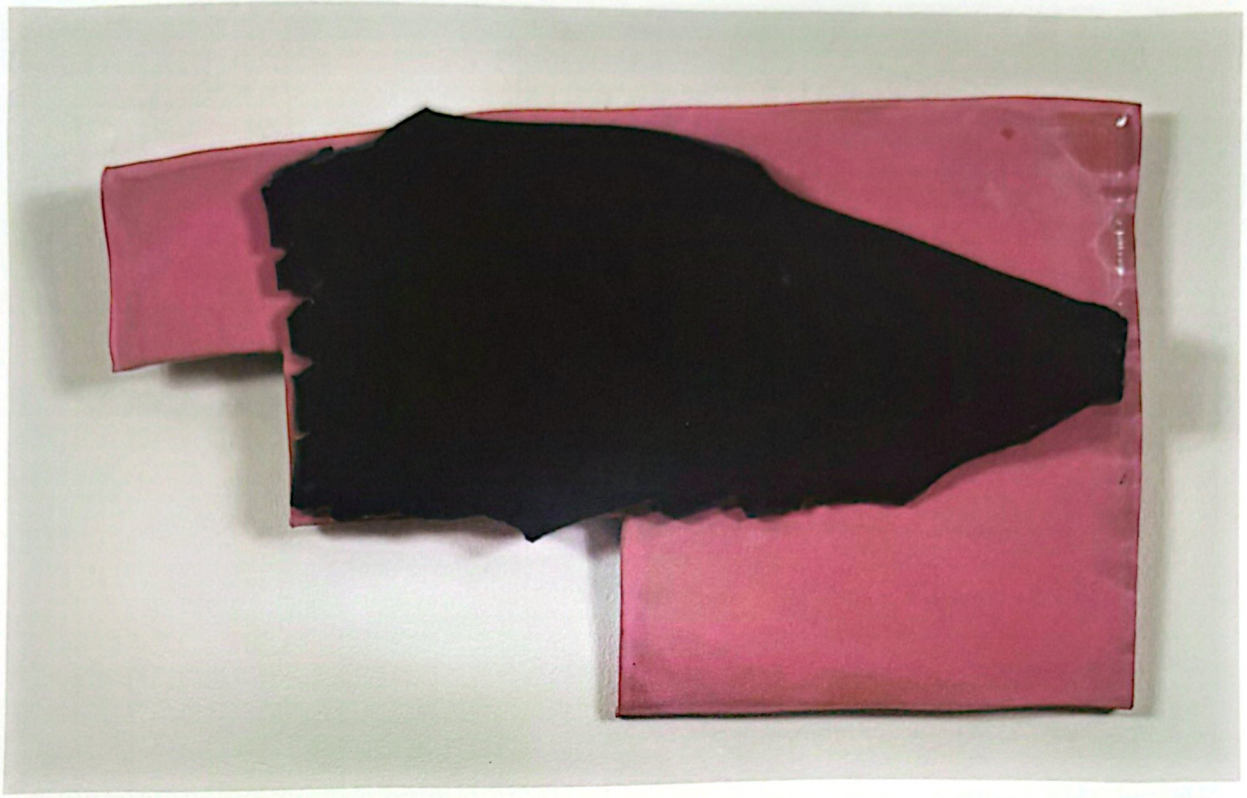
- *Red Metric*, 2015
  Glazed ceramic
  99.7 × 39.1 × 4.5 cm
  (39⅜ × 15⅜ × 1¾ in)

- *Pink Ocean Black Wave*, 2015
  Glazed ceramic
  22.9 × 41 × 4.5 cm
  (9 × 16⅛ × 1¾ in)

- *Fracture*, 2011
  Glazed ceramic on painted wood
  26.7 × 27.3 × 1.3 cm
  (10½ × 10¾ × ½ in)





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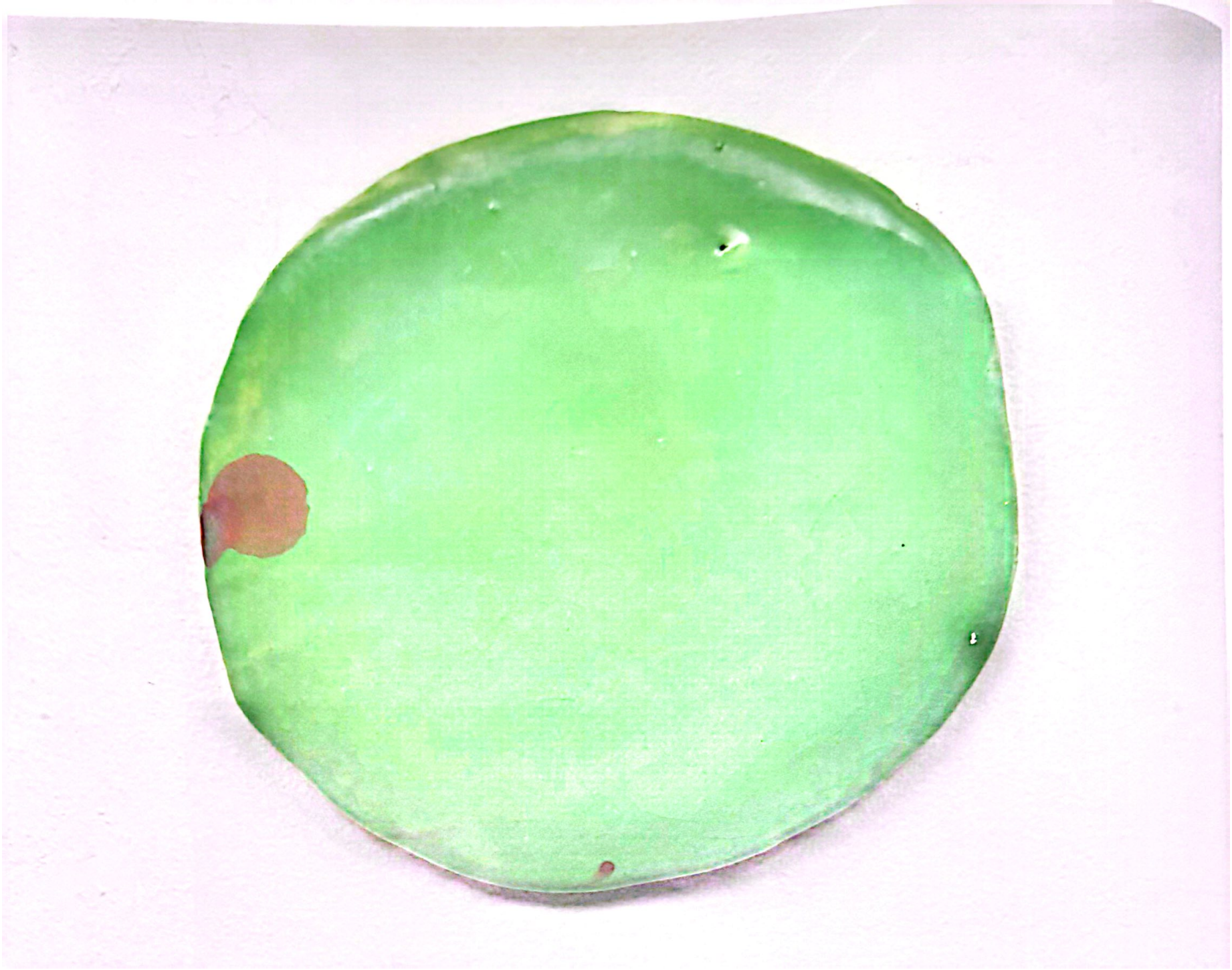

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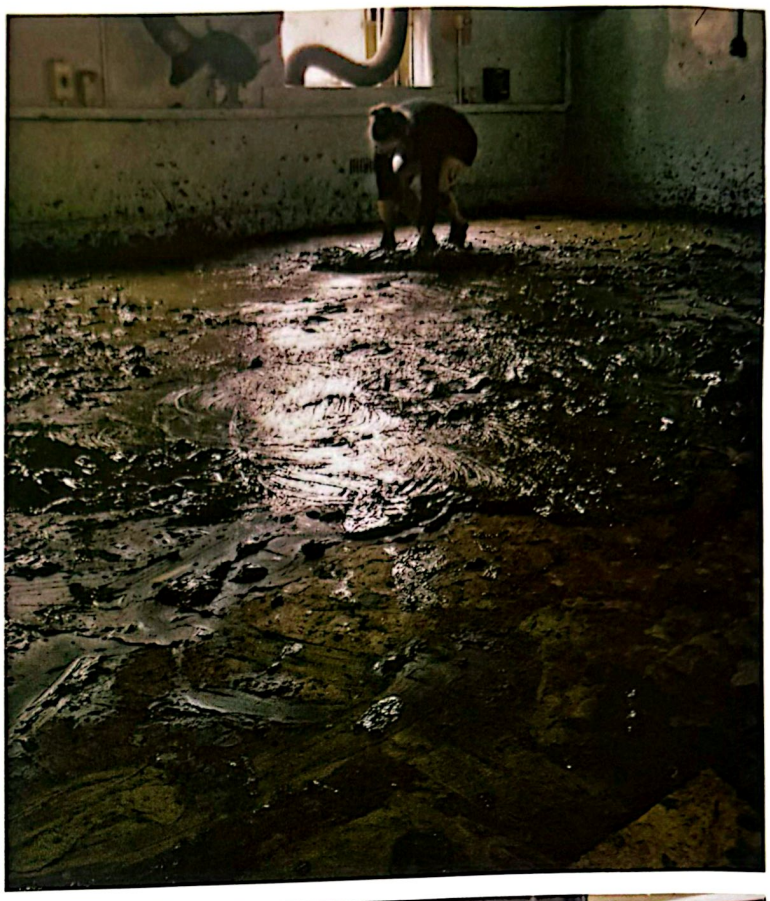
Having once found clay a frustrating art material and a 'punishment to have to work with', Emily Hesse re-evaluated its creative potential after encountering its raw form in the North East of England on the muddy banks of the mouth of the river Tees. Much of her art up to this point had involved gathering found or discarded objects, from driftwood to institutional noticeboards, and transforming them into sculptures and installations that drew on the aesthetics of minimal and post-minimal art to create new meanings and associations. By considering clay as another 'found' material – offered freely by the landscape, rather than a sanitized art product, packaged and sold – Hesse was able to put aside previous prejudices and associations, and begin an exploration into clay that encompassed both its inherent physical qualities and its symbolic role in the industrial heritage of Middlesbrough, her native town.

In one of her first works to incorporate clay, *One Cannot without Other* (2013), two timber beams that tilt in opposite directions are held in place by a connecting wire coated with wet clay. The balancing point of the sculpture seemingly defies gravity, speaking of the tension between clay's strength and fragility, alongside human relations, interdependency and change. In contrast *Womans Work* (2013) was essentially a performance and sculpture, with Hesse exploring her identity as female and mother. Taking bedsheets from her home, she used them to clean up a pile of wet clay from the floor, employing gestures that echoed the kind of hard physical labour involved in housework as experienced by many generations of women before her. She then hung out to dry the heavy, clay-soaked sheets upon a row of hooks, reminiscent of a washing line. Except that this grimy fabric was the antithesis of the gleaming white laundry seen in detergent commercials and, as such, suggested a rejection of the unrealistic media representations of femininity and domestic cleanliness: women's work is dirty work.

Another piece using fabric and clay, *Coming Home* (2014), saw a shift towards more permanent sculptural objects. Here, Hesse wrapped a clay-coated sheet around a wooden frame, folding the fabric to make a pocket in which she stuffed coils of discarded industrial rope. The title of the work speaks of a moment in the artist's life when she began to value her origins in a working-class, post-industrial town, rather than feeling ashamed or trapped by it, when she 'came home' to her identity. The industrial history of Teesside has also been a theme in works that incorporate found ceramics – particularly clay bricks which were locally made during the era of fast economic growth and its accompanying housing boom during the second half of the nineteenth century, only to be discarded as the population declined and many brick-built houses were demolished. In *Alceme* and *Galanthis* (2015–16) the artist stacked brick fragments and then refired them, uniting them in new forms, with titles connected to characters from Classical mythology – a possible comment on the way in which cultural industries can be seen to have replaced traditional heavy industry in Hesse's hometown. • Rebecca Morrill





Emily Hesse Born 1980, Middlesbrough, UK. Lives and works in Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Teeside, UK. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Post-Brexit Paradox', mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK; 2013 – 'Letting The Light In', Class 1 Gallery, Saltburn, UK; 2012 – 'We Are As Much What Lies Behind, As We Are Tomorrow', The Saltburn School, UK; 'I Will Never Forget You Not For All Of My Days', Saltburn Art Fair, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Localism' mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art; 'Nine', Bede's World, Jarrow, UK; 2014 – 'Postcards to America', Exchange Rates, Studio 10, Brooklyn, New York; 'Scrap', Python Gallery, Middlesbrough; 'The Greenhouse Project', House of Blah Blah, Middlesbrough; 'Flesh', Neon Arts, Hexham, UK; 2013 – 'Class 1 Gallery at Sluice Art Fair', Sluice Art Fair, London; 2012 – 'Emily Hesse & Sally Lister', Sledmere Gallery, Yorkshire, UK; 2011 – 'Emily Hesse & Lynne Wixon', Artsbank, Saltburn; 'Still Lives', Norman Rea Gallery, York, UK; 'Taken Away', Wobble and Squint Collective, London; 'The Exhibitionists', Redcar and Cleveland, UK.

ly Hesse

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← *Womans Work*, 2014
Bed sheets, river Tees clay,
meat hooks
Variable dimensions

† *Coming Home*, 2014
Bed sheet, River Tees clay,
found rope
150 × 130 cm
(59 × 51¼ in)

→ *Alcmene and Galanthis*, 2015–16
Found brick, copper
30 × 14 cm
(11¾ × 5½ in)

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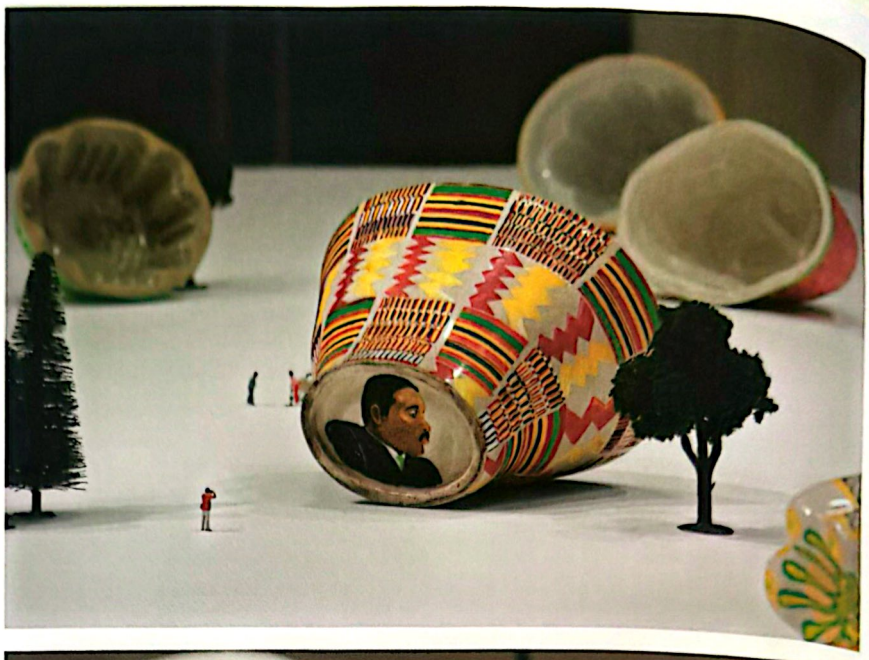
Using ceramic as a found material and selecting ready-made objects for her sculptures and installations, Lubaina Himid has used domestic crockery as part of her broader art practice which, for over thirty years, has explored issues of race, gender, class and cultural identity. One of the vanguard of Britain's Black Arts Movement in the 1980s, Himid gained attention for her paintings, prints and works on paper, as well as for important curatorial projects, such as 'Black Woman Time Now' (1983) and 'The Thin Black Line' (1986). Since 1990 she has maintained her art practice alongside a teaching role at the University of Central Lancashire, where she is now Professor of Contemporary Art.

Her first work to use ceramics, *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* (2007), was a commission for the Judge's Lodgings Museum, a social history institution in a seventeenth-century townhouse in Lancaster. Invited to engage with their collections, Himid's attention was drawn by a dining table made of Caribbean mahogany in the eighteenth century – an era when Britain's wealth was being dramatically increased as a result of slavery and its associated industries (cotton, sugar, tobacco, etc.). Indeed, the table's designer was known to have part shares in a ship used for the slave trade. Himid sought to create a new 'dinner service' – a set of ceramic tableware for formal dining which, prior to mass production, was the preserve of the wealthy upper classes and came to be a signifier of social aspiration. Himid's piece involved one hundred second-hand plates, jugs and terrines over whose existing designs she painted imagery of slave ships, African vistas and patterns, and portraits of unidentified black slave servants. The resulting work serves as a reminder of hidden and uncomfortable histories that run parallel to mainstream accounts, as well as the way in which domestic ceramics have symbolic currency in relation to issues of oppression and inequality.

Himid returned again to pre-existing ceramic objects in *Jelly Mould Pavilions* (2011), a work that was first presented in Liverpool, another British city with strong historic connections to the slave trade. For this work she adorned the outsides and bases of ceramic jelly moulds (chosen for their obvious connections to the sugar industry and strong associations with the Victorian era) with paintings of traditional African patterns and portraits of individuals from the Black diaspora who contributed to the history, culture and fabric of both Liverpool and the wider world. Presented on a large flat surface with model trees and tiny figures – as used in architectural models – the installation emphasizes the idea of these forms as differently shaped pavilions. The work is in fact like a prototype for commemorative monuments, and raises questions about which individuals are typically celebrated and memorialized in our public spaces. • Rebecca Morrill

Lubaina Himid Born 1954, Zanzibar, Tanzania. Livers and works in Preston, UK. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Lubaina Himid: Invisible Strategies', Modern Art Oxford, UK; 'Lubaina Himid Navigation Charts', Spike Island, Bristol, UK, and touring to First Site, Colchester, UK; Harris Museum, Preston, UK; 'Lubaina Himid', Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany; 'Lubaina Himid: Naming the Money', Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK. 2013 – Hollybush Gardens, London; 2012 – 'Moments that Matter/ Cultural Olympiad', Harris Museum, Preston, UK; 2010 – 'Jelly Mould Pavilions', Sudley House Liverpool and Liverpool Museums, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Manchester International Festival', UK; South London Gallery, London; 'The Place Is Here', Nottingham Contemporary, UK; 2016 – 'The 1980s Today's Beginnings?', Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands; 2015 – Textiles', Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK; 'The Feast Wagon', The Tetley, Leeds, UK; 14th Istanbul Biennale, Turkey; 2014 – '10th Gwangju Biennale', South Korea; 'Keywords', Tate Liverpool, UK; 2013 – 'Keywords', International Institute for Visual Art, London; 2012 – Migrations', Tate Britain, London; 2011 – 'Hunter Gatherer', Project Space Leeds, UK.





↑ *Jelly Mould Pavilion*, [details] 2011
Acrylic paint on found ceramic
Variable dimensions

↗ *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* [detail], 2007
Acrylic on porcelain
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Lubaina Himid - Invisible Strategies', exhibition, Modern Art Oxford, 2017

→ Part of *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service*, 2007
Acrylic paint on porcelain
15 × 7 × 11 cm
(5⅞ × 2¾ × 4⅓ in)

→→ Part of *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service*, 2007
Acrylic paint on porcelain
23.5 × 23.5 × 2.5 cm
(9¼ × 9¼ × 1 in)

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Christian Holstad's work is grotty. He gathers up detritus to delve into the West's wasteful obsession with consuming. Intricate and beautiful up close, when seen en masse it swarms with over-ripe and pulses with the tone of underground activity. Holstad's practice encompasses sculpture, installation, performance, film, drawing, collage and print. Since his time at art school he has continually used clay to produce objects from crumpled lampshades to drifts of orange peel.

Holstad's installations assemble reams of found matter and made objects including items as various as felted wool, coat hangers, towels and glazed ceramics. Pieces combine contrasting human-made objects ('German Tinsel' or 'vintage Christmas decoration') that will never degrade, with matter that comes from the earth and easily returns to it (rust, pubic hair and dirt).

One series of drawings, in graphite and pastel on newsprint, from 2008–9, depicts cracked and smashed Wedgwood ceramics decorated with motifs of snaking chains, arms and hands. Corrupted human figures emerge along with news headlines, while large sections of text are erased and fragmented, referencing the partial digestion of information. While these works are delicate, they evoke the flotsam of trash drifting in windy streets.

Much of Holstad's work explores the meeting points between internal and external, whether through references to the domestic and public or in the sculptural entrails that he exposes to the world. Mouths – the perfect symbol of this interim space – are inherent within his references to sex and food. The shell of an egg, another leitmotif, is a membrane that once broken cannot be repaired, exposing the life (or sustenance) within to an entirely new atmosphere.

A recurring iconography of consumption includes shopping bags, trolleys and dustbins. In works such as *3 Pattern of Apples (Trash Can Lid) and Blind Taste Test n. 3 (Trash Can Lid)* (both 2015), Holstad uses symbols of reproduction (snakes and eggs) to summon the cycles of desire, production and decay that are at the centre of human existence in the materially developed world. At the heart of an enquiry into consumption is food. Holstad is fascinated by the impact of this industry and in exploring the visual world of grub.

Tantalizing tableaus, as in *Priapus* (2015), mimic pornographic visualizations of delicacies that run through the advertising and social media streams of today. Depictions of mass-produced foodstuffs, such as *Sandwich Grid (o,l,m,c, toasty)* (2011–12), turn organic matter into hyped-up patterns abstracted from any sense of nutrition. Across a whole practice, this over-abundance creates a sickly cornucopia of cuisine that rings empty, echoing the hollowness of a consumption-focused world.

Human production and ingestion of food is intertwined with the history of ceramics. Working in clay is a little like cooking: the combination of organic ingredients, the heat used to form and set, and the timings that are essential to any recipe. Holstad is clearly spellbound by the alchemy of ceramics. There is no better material to speak of entropy than one which has been used for millennia to fix the ground in a temporary form. • Elinor Morgan

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Christian Holstad Born 1972, Anaheim, California. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Selected Solo Shows: 2017 – Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; 2016 – 'Be Clear With Your Intent', Schmidt & Handrup, Cologne, German 'Toothpick', Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan; 2014 – 'Corrections', Victoria Miro, London; 2013 – 'The Book of h/Ours', Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; 2009 – 'I Confess', Palazzo Santa Margherita, Modena, Italy. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Magazine Sessions 2016', Serpentine Galleries, London; 'Chromaphilia & Chromaphobia', Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas; 2013 – 'Aquatopia', Nottingham Contemporary, UK, and touring to Tate St Ives, Cornwall, UK; 'Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art', Zhejiang Art Museum and the China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou; 2012 – 'Graphite', Indianapolis Museum of Art; 2011 – 'The Air We Breathe', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 'Coming After', The Power Plant, Toronto; 'Compass: Drawings from the Museum of Modern Art New York' Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin.



Christian Holstad

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Bilbao, 2015
Glazed ceramic
[illegible] × 19 × 14 cm
([illegible] × 7½ × 5½ in)

Wind Tante Test n. 3
(Trash Can Lid) [detail], 2015
Glazed ceramic, linoleum,
wood and dishwasher basket
[illegible] × 49 × 49 cm
([illegible] × 19½ × 19½ in)

There is an abundance of
goodness within you, 2016
Glazed ceramic, marbled
coloured clay
34 × 80 × 30 cm
(13½ × 31½ × 11½ in)





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Born in Istanbul and educated in Milan, Emre Hüner has experienced the privileges and disadvantages witnessed by many artists from the Mediterranean. In this part of the world, art and architecture in all their forms are plentiful and accessible, from the earliest days of the Egyptian and Greek civilizations to the Ottoman and Roman empires, up to the Renaissance, Baroque and Impressionism. While such variety can be a source of inspiration, it also provides a saturated playing field where developing your own voice can be extremely difficult. Hüner tackled this head on.

An avid researcher and collector of images, his practice connects literature, ancient architecture, science fiction, the aviation industry, the writings of Michel Houellebecq, and the art of Hieronymus Bosch. Starting broadly, his works eventually solidify into a single idea underpinned by his own narrative. Alongside his fascination for the historical jumps from one age to another; he also has a keen interest in the utopianism of early twentieth-century architecture, where imagining the city of the future turned into testimony to past failures. Borrowing the title of Oswald de Andrade's essay 'Manifesto Antropófago' (1928) – a study of how post-colonial Brazil cannibalized other cultures in order to create its own – for Rodeo Istanbul's 2013 exhibition *Anthropophagy*, Hüner played the multiple roles of artist, archaeologist and futurologist to present sculptures that picture fictional landscapes where ceramics are unfinished. Defined by a mysterious aura that hints at the old modernist interest in primitivism as a means to better understand the complexity of the human brain, the group of sculptures look as if they have been originally shaped by human hand, only to be modified by nature.

Similar notions can also be detected in *Neochronophobiq* (2015), a video work that, as the title suggests, plays with Neolithicism, chronophobia and ubiquity. Objects are presented that seem very much alive, activated through their tactile quality, circular movements and cranky sounds. This introduces another sideline to Hüner's modus operandi – the fluid relationship between his subjects and the media used to represent them. Drawings can generate videos; videos and photographs can result in three-dimensional pieces. This was the case with *Perpetual Island Infinite Vehicle* (2015), the body of work presented at the 14th Istanbul Biennial. Initially conceived as a publication featuring materials from a film, *Perpetual Island* was subsequently converted into ceramic scale models reproducing potentially geological formations capable of supporting life. Houellebecq, in his controversial novel about the obsession with immortality, *The Possibility of an Island* (2005), told of the parallel stories of a man and the future lives his clones have. The clones are an evolved, brighter version of their originator, and yet they lack his sense of history and emotional understanding. By constantly juggling past, present and future in a perceptively seductive way, Hüner's art challenges conventional views of what progress is, as well as reminding us that materials, when found in nature, can never be dismissed as 'old', even if they have been deployed to describe an ancient present. • Michele Robecchi

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Emre Hüner Born 1977, Istanbul, Turkey. Lives and works in Istanbul. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Emre Hüner', Protocinema, New York; 2016 – 'Neochronophobiq', STUK, Leuven, Belgium; 'Emre Hüner, Joanna Rajkowska', SALT Ulus, Ankara, Turkey; 'Hypabyssal', Salaseis, Marso Gallery, Mexico City; 2015 – 'Floating Cabin Rider Capsule Reactor Cycle', CCA Kitakyushu, Japan; 2013 – 'Aeolian', Rodeo, Istanbul, Turkey; 2012 – 'Emre Hüner', salt 6, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City; 2010 – 'The New Horizon', Stroom, The Hague, The Netherlands. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Planet 9', Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Germany; 2016 – 'Istanbul. Passion, Joy, Fury', Maxxi, Rome; 2015 – 14th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey; 'The Chicken and The Egg, The Chicken', Rodeo, London; 'Every Inclusion Is An Exlusion of Other Possibilities', SALT Beyoglu, Istanbul; 'In Search of A Radical Incomplete: A Perfect Animal Within', Center for Contemporary Art, Prishtina, Kosovo; 2013 – 'Approximately Infinite Universe', San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, California; 2012 – 'Manifesta 9', Genk, Belgium.

Emre Hüner



† *I have completed the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful*, 2011
Fired clay, steel, paint
162 × 88 × 68 cm
(63¾ × 34⅝ × 26¾ in)
Installation view, 'Quixotic', Art Statements, Art Basel, Switzerland

→ *Anthropophagy*, 2013
Glazed ceramics, wood, iron, paint, various materials
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Aeolian' exhibition, Rodeo, Istanbul

→ *Perpetual Island Infinite Vehicle*, 2015
Glazed ceramics, steel, paint.
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms' exhibition, 14th Istanbul Biennial

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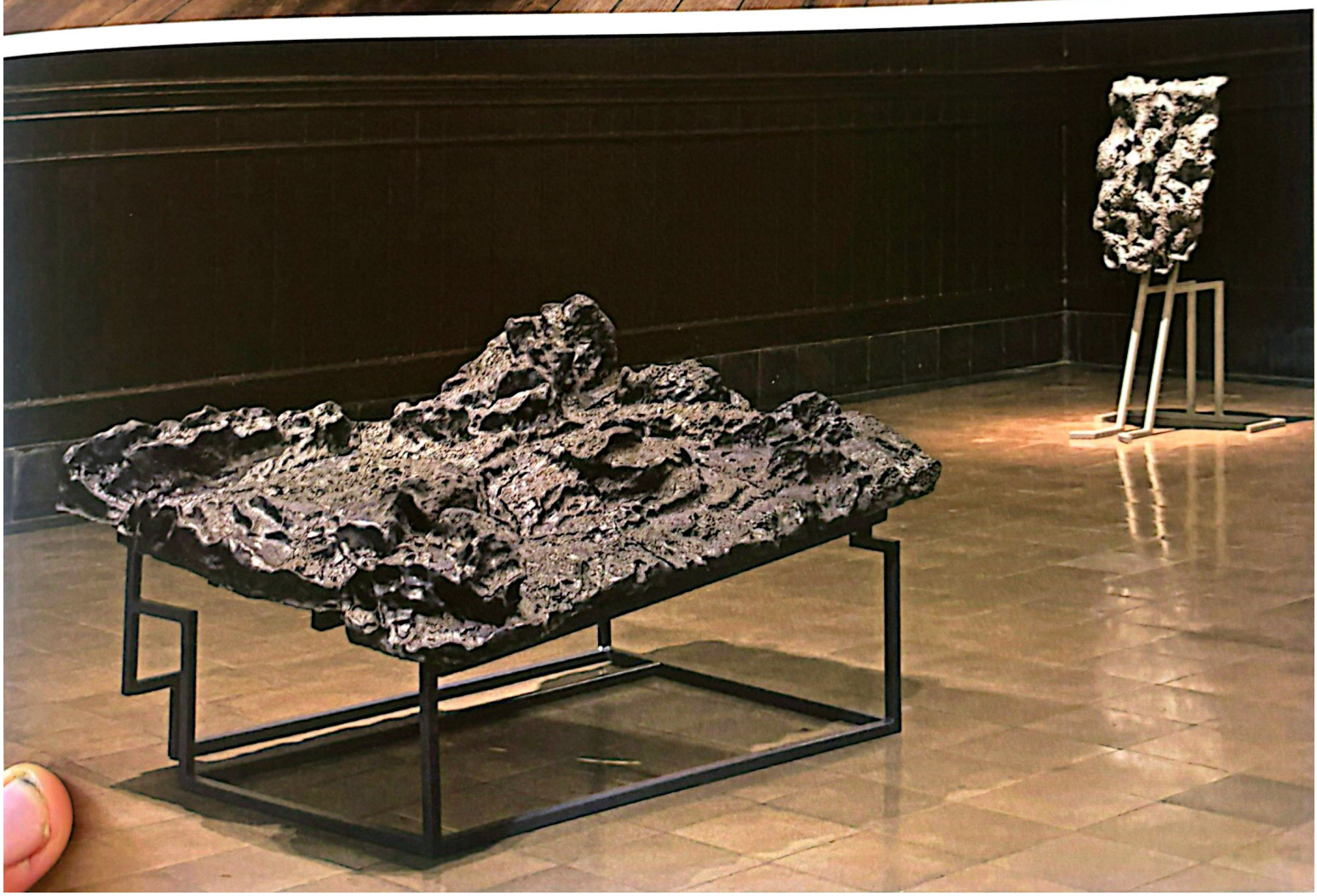

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Than Hussein Clark's practice employs tactics that are both frivolous and subversive. 'When I put pen to paper, I do think, "Is this gay enough?",' he has said in an interview with artist Charlie Billingham. Clark sees the decorative line and ornament as a lineage of queer expression travelling from symbolism, via Surrealism, into the golden 1920s of Jean Cocteau and the Art Deco style, evident in his 'Quarter Tone Telephone' series (2015), for example. However, in the post-war period, this lineage was interrupted by the victory of abstraction and modernist tendencies and their stress on nonfigurative and nondecorative approaches. For Clark, to mediate the interrupted tradition of queer culture means to recentre the importance of theatre based on submersion, eroticism, melodrama and tragedy. Though seemingly decadent and hysterical, at its depth Clark's work is entirely about identity politics.

Clark sees the interior space as an embodiment of the aspirations and anxieties of the bourgeoisie; it is a place where deep-rooted prejudices and the everyday fascism of family life and friendship originate and take place. He is inspired by the work of German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who in his films references the interior elements, which are used to actively escalate the narrative line. The central element of Clark's practice explores the subtexts of apparently 'chic' objects. For example, in *Nag's Honeymoon Sans Nell (Before Legless, Before the Trashcan)* (2016), a porcelain figure, reminiscent of a wedding cake topper (in all its white, saccharine purity), holds a twee parasol while wearing a top hat and sitting in an armchair. Set atop a rustic, concrete plinth, the contrast in materials creates a tension where this calm domestic image is underpinned with imperfect coarseness.

Clark's works have the ambiance of a nervous breakdown. He personally has a self-destructive working rhythm marked by insomnia, producing dozens of exhibitions, theatre plays and books at any one time. This frenetic output is also apparent in the element of self-sabotage that Clark brings to an otherwise immensely elaborate production process – one where he works with a network of highly skilled craftspeople and shows them a series of sketches, sectional views [what does this mean?], and screenings [does he show films? This is unclear?] to communicate a very precise idea of how the final work should look. Despite this, he makes split-second decisions rather than protracted ones, something which brings a tension to the whole process, providing it with the necessary spark and creative energy.

Clark's work demonstrates an apparent fondness for things, luxury, craftsmanship and precious materials, yet the results have an unfinished, imperfect quality; this combination relieves it from the weight of materialism and gives it a stage set-like quality, evident in pieces such as *Cancellation: Binoculars* (2013), for example. Instead of modernist emptiness and purity, Clark chooses excess; in his work, liberation from the weight of things doesn't entail asceticism, but rather involves coming to a potlatch feast. • Michal Novotný

Than Hussein Clark Born 1981, Exeter, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Hollywood Regency', Galerie Crevecour, Paris; 2016 – 'A Month In The Country', Karin Günther Gallery, Hamburg, Germany; 2015 – 'Authorizations', Mathew NYC, New York; 'DEBTS (Erotic Review Sinai)', Futura, Prague; 'The Violet Crab', David Roberts Art Foundation, London; 2013 – 'Waves (Das Glückliche Rothschild)', Mathew, Berlin. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'WHO ARE YOU?', Salts, Basel, Switzerland; 2015 – 'Mon Horizontalité', Until Then, Paris; 2014 – 'Transatlantic Transparency', Mathew Gallery, Berlin and Mathew NYC, New York; 'Like A Virgin', VI, VII, Oslo; 2013 – 'Love Is Still Colder Than Capital', Mathew, Berlin; 2012 – 'Volcano Extravaganza 2012', Fiorucci Arts Trust, Stromboli, Italy.



Than Hussein Clark

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Nag's Honeymoon Sans Nell (Before Legless, Before the Trashcan), 2016
Concrete, artic porcelain, steal enamel
130 × 24 × 24 cm
(51⅛ × 9½ × 9½ in)

Cancellation: Binoculars, 2013
Patinated bronze, brass, oxide glaze, laser cut Edmund de Waal thrown porcelain jar
85 × 110 × 10 cm
(33½ × 43¼ × 3⅞ in)

Quarter Tone Telephone (Prototype C) with Table in Semi-Egyptian Style, 2015
Eathernware, glaze, brass, speaker, electrics (audio: quarter-tone piano loop)
Telephone (Prototype):
40 × 25 × 18 cm
(15¾ × 9⅞ × 7⅛ in)
Table: 90 × 30 × 30 cm
(35⅜ × 11¾ × 11¾ in)

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What do the everyday objects that surround us reveal about our habits, thoughts and feelings? Responding to the information embedded in our 'stuff', Jessica Jackson Hutchins works across painting and sculpture, with clay predominating, to create often-humorous assemblages. Monuments to the domestic, with all its accompanying emotional complexity and neuroses, they combine the pathetic with the heroic, the uncanny with the mundane.

Every Man Has his Tastes (2013–14) is exemplary of her approach. A distended armchair and footrest, banal and sagging, form a decrepit plinth for a ceramic object that sits meatily on the cushioning. The works' title immediately points to this concept of taste: a category of personal aesthetic discernment and choice, it marks the subjective ability to differentiate between something that is of value or not. 'Good taste', indelibly inflected with a sense of bourgeois social hierarchy, is consistently and provocatively flouted in Jackson Hutchins's works in favour of visceral immediacy. If we reading a double meaning into the word 'taste', it leads us, via the mouth, to the body. Jackson Hutchins uses ceramic to create anthropomorphic structures that resemble bodies, tongues, intestines, all awkward flesh that dictates our somatic relationship to the world. In an interview with *BOMB Magazine*, the artist described her specific approach to skill, stating, 'I obscure any sense of craft so that my own skill is not a subject.' Her sculptures do not foreground bravura or technical showmanship, and the medium of ceramics is employed for its earthy and bodily materiality, rather than its history or formal traditions.

Newly made and found objects are brought together in Jackson Hutchins's work to create an affective visual language of recognition and alienation. Akin to the titans of American bric-a-brac assemblage, such as Robert Rauschenberg and Ed Kienholz, her works combine the overlooked aspects of daily life to create vaguely troubling and uncanny moments. *Couch For A Long Time* (2009) moves into a more explicitly political realm, and into direct contact with 'reality'. A three-seater sofa – which refers to one from the artist's childhood – is covered in newspaper cuttings from *The New York Times* that each carry stories about Barack Obama. The piece was made during the run up to Obama's first election campaign. Various ceramic objects sit on the sofa; some resemble traditional vases, others are elongated hot dog-like forms. Here, the domestic space is conflated with seismic political change and a narrative of hope: from this sofa a historic election campaign might have been watched on TV, accompanied by the wish (stated in the work's title) that this elated feeling might last 'a long time'. In retrospect – and taking into account the 2017 inauguration of President Donald Trump – this feeling was as quick to age as the newspaper itself. • Natasha Hoare

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Jessica Jackson Hutchins Born 1971, Chicago. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Jessica Jackson Hutchins: Cool Wake', Columbus College of Art and Design, Beeler Gallery Columbus, Ohio; 2015 – 'Jessica Jackson Hutchins: Confessions Portland', The Lumber Room and The Cooley Gallery at Reed College, Portland, Oregon; 'I Do Choose', Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, 2014 – 'Coming II', Johann König, Berlin; 'Unicorn', The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; 'Jessica Jackson Hutchins', Timothy Taylor Gallery, London, UK; 2013 – 'Jessica Jackson Hutchins', Hepworth Wakefield Museum, UK, and travelling to Centre PasquArt, Kunsthaus Centre D'art, Biel, Switzerland; 2011 – 'Jessica Jackson Hutchins', ICA, Boston. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Portland2016 Biennial', Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, Oregon; 'Material Issue: Subverting Form and Function', Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville; 2015 – 'Mining the Ancient', Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Oshman Family Gallery, California; 2014 – 'Archeo', The Highline, New York; 2013 – 'The Suburban', Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Ohio; 'The Encyclopedic Palace', 55th Venice Biennale; 2011 – 'Reclaimed: Nature and Place Through Contemporary Eyes', Seattle Art Museum; 2010 – 'The Whitney Biennial, 2010', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Jessica Jackson Hutchins





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After early experiments with performance, Elizabeth Jaeger turned to making three-dimensional female nudes that stood in for her own body. The figurative sculptures, such as the series, *Platinum Musing*, (2011) were intended to create in the viewer the same kind of self-awareness that performance can: a presence that heightens one's cognizance of a shared time and space. Crafted from ceramic and hydrocal (a form of gypsum that dries hard like plaster), the life-size figures strike both familiar and unusual poses. One is languorously sprawled on a gold lamé cushion; another is doing a handstand while balancing a bowl of fresh gardenias in her crotch. They are gestural and erotic, assertive and vulnerable. As surrogates for the artist herself, it is as if they say: 'I'll perform as you expect me to, but in the process I'll show you what you're really asking of me.'

If these early figures were surrogates for the artist's body, a subsequent group of works replaced that body completely, substituting it with vessels. The transition was made in a work of 2013 titled *Serving Vessels*. A sculpture of Jaeger's reclining body, composed and confrontational, is displayed atop and among an assortment of misshapen vessels. The table and shelving suggest a setting that is both domestic and clinical. The figure is there to be consumed and perhaps dissected, but the deep black finish of both the figure and the vessels gives the sculpture a funereal aura.

The matte blackness of many of Jaeger's sculptures draws us in, their surfaces recording the artist's gesture and touch. But Jaeger delivers these haptic objects on and within industrially fabricated steel structures: shelves, tables, pedestals and vitrine-like structures, the cold hardness of which contrasts with the organic character of the clay. This display strategy places distance between the vessels and both their making and their reception. Jaeger's vessels are at once physical objects and stand-ins for the ideas of those objects; as such, they represent loss and mortality.

Jack Jaeger (Vessel #1–9) distorts the vessel to the point of dysfunction. Nine wide yet impossibly flat vessels balance on steel sawhorses. Made in homage to Jaeger's ailing grandfather, the black monochromatic sculptures are anthropomorphic and empathetic. They test the limits of the clay and they court collapse. In fact, each of the vessels is cracked. For Jaeger, the crack is not failure but rather a result of tension that she invites. She considers it an event that 'occurs in the realm of the possible'. The realm of the possible is life and of course life also includes death. The flatness of these sculptures establishes a front and back, and they perform the most basic task of sculpture – of defying gravity – while drawing attention to their humble frailty. They stand together, an imperfect and precarious, but united, group.
• Mary Ceruti

Elizabeth Jaeger Born 1988, San Francisco. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Elizabeth Jaeger', Jack Hanley Gallery, New York; 2015 – '8:30', And Now, Dallas; 2014 – 'Six-Thirty', Jack Hanley Gallery; 2013 – 'Music Stand', Eli Ping, New York; 2011 – 'YESWAY', Carhole, Portland, Oregon. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Katy Cowan, Sara Cwynar, Elizabeth Jaeger and Willa Nasatir', Fourteen 30 Contemporary, Portland, Oregon; 'Lentils', Ramiken Crucible, New York; 2016 – 'Cool Memories', Occidental Temporary, Viellejuif, France; 'In Practice: Fantasy Can Invent Nothing New', SculptureCenter, New York; 'Mirror Cells', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 'Watermark', SIGNAL, Brooklyn; 'Fear of a Blank Pancake', White Flag Projects, St. Louis, Missouri; 2015 – 'Greater New York', MoMA PS1, New York; 'Weird Science', Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; 'Close to the Skin', Company, New York; 'Dirty Linen', DESTE Foundation, Athens; 2014 – 'Got Tortilla with Butter on Phone. Think it's the End?', Rod Barton, London; 'Border Food', Loyal Gallery, Malmo, Sweden; 'Former Models', BRIC, New York; 2012 – 'Rock Lobster', Shoot the Lobster, New York; 2009 – 'Show ID', Gallery X, Chicago.

Eliz[illegible] Jaeger





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ɪeger *(Vessel I)*, 2016
c, blackened steel
arred oak
..2 × 149.9 cm
× 59 in)

ɪger *(Vessel II)*, 2016
, blackened steel
rred oak
2 × 149.9 cm
× 59 in)

Vessels, 2013
, Hydro-Stone, steel,
d synthetic fibre
52.4 × 50.8 cm
× 20 in)

ger *(Vessel I–VI)*, 2016
blackened steel
red oak
dimensions

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Cameron Jamie first came to prominence around the turn of the millennium for his films documenting unusual practices and rituals. With subjects ranging from elaborate Halloween decorations in Los Angeles suburbs to erotic dancing with furniture, Jamie's art reveals a fascination for subculture groups, masquerade and eccentric forms of expression. For example, *BB* (1998–2000) looks at the phenomenon of 'backyard wrestling', while *Kranky Klaus* (2002–3) follows the exploits of the malevolent Krampus, an Austrian mythical beast that is half-mountain goat, half-demon, who punishes bad children in the run-up to Christmas. The transformative potential of the rituals, fear and violence performed in these films has been a mainstay of Jamie's practice.

Working with clay enables Jamie to explore a different kind of transformation: the material changes undergone by the clay and glazes as they are modelled and fired. In an interview with *Artforum*, he described this process in terms of a primordial swing from creation to destruction and back again: 'I would build and build and build and build, and then at a certain point, just out of pure anger, I would just destroy it and start all over again. Just destroy the clay, bring it back down to the basis: [then] build, build, build. This happens all the time with me.' Jamie also uses the kiln in unconventional ways, repeatedly firing his ceramics, and pouring glaze upon glaze so that they end up attacking one another, biting and dissolving each other's colour and sheen. Such daring experimentation is risky, and during his exhibition at Natalie Obadia, Jamie explained that many 'of these creatures don't make it as far as the exhibition'.

Works that are successful in making it to exhibition stage possess psychedelic swirling colours and aggregated textures. Some take the form of thick-walled masks, glazed inside and out. Others end up as upward-rising statuettes coated in iridescent and luscious glazes, perched on curvy plinths ornamented with Rococo-style strings of hourglass-shaped beads that bear the imprint of the artist's fingers. In the pewter-coloured *MM* (2014), the bulbous head and wiry legs of a foetus-like form connect via a cord to a cursory version of itself attached to the edge of the work. The two shapes rest on a background of modelled silver coral that seem drawn together like iron filings to an irresistible magnet. The emotion, destruction and subsequent transformation, which Jamie associates with his work in clay, seem to have found their focus in *MM*'s highly manipulated and organic aspect, the raw emotions and turmoil sublimated into an elaborate new creation. • Ellen Mara De Wachter



Cameron Jamie Born 1969, Los Angeles. Lives and works in Paris. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Domestic Arenas: Massage the History, BB, Kranky Klaus', Gladstone Gallery, New York; 2015 – 'Cameron Jamie', Gladstone Gallery, New York; 2014 – 'Cameron Jamie', Bernier/Eliades Gallery, Athens, Greece; 2013 – 'Drawings, Figures and Compression Fracture Paintings', Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, Germany; 'Inner Planets: Cameron Jamie', Palmenhaus des Alten Botanischen Gartens Zürich; 'Cameron Jamie', Kunsthalle Zurich; 'Artist Books by Cameron Jamie selected by Walther König', Antiquariat Buchholz, Cologne, Germany; 2011 – 'Cameron Jamie: Statuettes and Drawings', Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris; 'Cameron Jamie Film Retrospective', Cineteca Nacional Mexico, Mexico City. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Void California', CCA Wattis Institue for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; 'Impressions of Transfrontier/Connecting Lines: 25 Years of El Nopal Press', Oficina de Proyectos Culturals, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; 'Strength In Numbers: Photography in Groups', Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; 'The Infinite Mix', Hayward Gallery, London; 'Luster: Clay in Sculpture Today', Fundament Foundation, Park De Oude Warnade, Tilburg, Netherlands; 2015 – 'Collecting Lines: Drawings From The Ringier Collection', Villa Flora, Winterhur, Switzerland; 'La vie moderne', La Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, France; 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France.

Cameron Jamie

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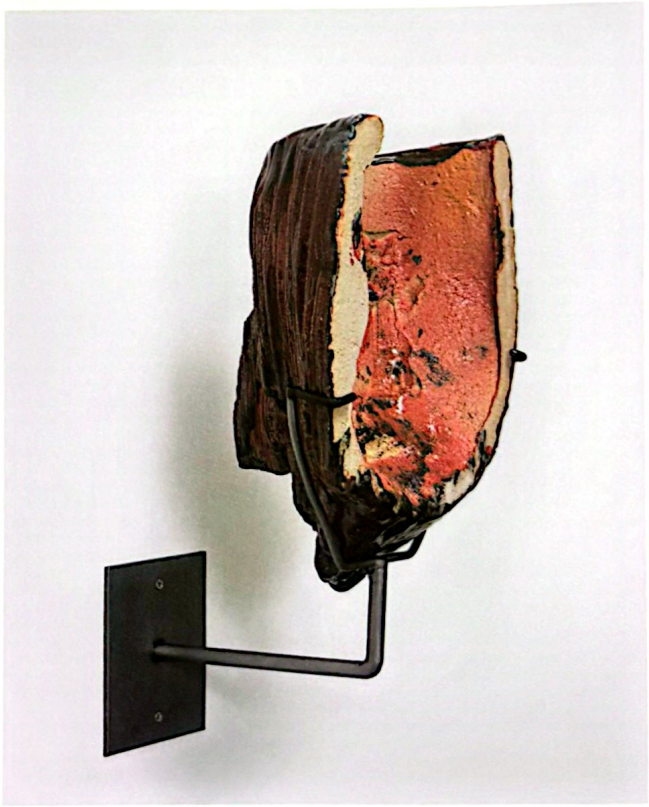

MM, 2014
Glazed ceramic
78.8 × 57.2 × 15.2 cm
(31 × 22½ × 6 in)

Installation view, 'Cameron Jamie' exhibition, Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2015

Untitled, 2014–15
Glazed ceramic
51.1 × 25.4 × 17.5 cm
(12¼ × 10 × 6¾ in)

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Markus Karstieß's discovery of clay dates back to a 2005 encounter with Lucio Fontana's terracotta relief *Il Sole* (1952), a four-by-five-metre depiction of the sun housed in a purpose-built pavilion at the Raketenstation Hombroich, a thirteen-hectare cultural property near Düsseldorf. Karstieß took up a residency at the foundation, built on the site of a former NATO missile station, and immediately began experimenting with clay. Essentially a monolingual artist, clay forming the basis of all his mature work, Karstieß's output is nonetheless compositionally diverse and often showcased in ensemble arrangements.

Chamber (2010), a rectangular steel-mesh enclosure with cracked black ceramic interior walls, harks back to the volumes of minimalist sculpture. His 'Fetish' series (2006–ongoing) – iridescent totem-like ceramic sculptures with Rorschach geometries – forms part of an expressionist seam running throughout his work that also includes wall reliefs and vases. *Dirty Corners* (2013), a set of freestanding rectangular screens that bear abundant traces of the artist's hand, further underlines the performative basis of all his work.

Karstieß is a graduate of Germany's prestigious Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where Jannis Kounellis, a doyen of Italy's Arte Povera movement, mentored him. His practice shares the same promiscuous approach to space as the forebears of this earlier avant-garde. *Hello Darkness* (2014) is a composite sound installation that includes lustre-glazed ceramic cylinders suspended over raw earth from the north east of England. The work, produced during a residency at Newcastle University, includes a recording of Karstieß striking the cylinders like a percussive instrument. This melding of ancient and new medias, of material and ephemeral sources, also forms the basis of his ongoing curatorial project *Corridor Plateau*, an itinerant exhibition series co-curated with painter Christian Freudenberger that explores the idea of the cave as a place of creativity.

Karstieß draws on a range of firing techniques in his work, including the Japanese low-fire raku method. *The Golden Pool* (2016), a site-specific sculpture produced for an outdoor exhibition in Tilburg, incorporates precious metal glazes achieved using an old Arabian firing technique. This mysterious work is composed of three stump-like gold forms emerging from a shimmering golden-blue pond made of an irregular matrix of ceramic plates, each bearing traces of Karstieß's hand; it proposes a scene of primal creation and post-industrial despoliation. This past-future dichotomy is central to Karstieß's understanding of clay, a material that is itself a product of geological time.

'If you work with clay, you work with nature,' Karstieß told artist Susie Pentelow in 2015. 'You work with the past and the future at the same time.' In 2014, Karstieß's interest in our recent human past saw him embark on a search for material traces of Robert Smithson's first 'flow' work, *Asphalt Rundown* (1969), produced by dumping a load of asphalt down a cliff at an abandoned quarry in Rome. Initially flummoxed by what to do with the small stony fragments he found, Karstieß later exhibited the granular objects with lava-like qualities on glazed ceramic bases alongside Chinese and Japanese scholar's rocks. These naturally occurring stones lent his installation *Scholar's Rocks* (2015) its sardonically descriptive title. • Sean O'Toole

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Markus Karstieß Born 1971, Haan, Germany. Lives and works in Düsseldorf. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Princessehof', National Museum of Ceramics, Leeuwarden, Netherlands; 2016 – 'Irden', Siza Pavillon, Raketenstation Insel Hombroich, Neuss, Germany; 2015 – 'With the eyes of the earth: Abate, Smithson, Karstieß', Van Horn, Düsseldorf; 'Soft Revolution' (with Chr. Jendreiko), Drop City, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK; 2014 – 'Hello Darkness', mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK; 'Boxes & Corners', Hatton Gallery Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'New Sculpture from Germany', Goethe Institut Hong Kong; Luster – Clay in Sculpture Today', Fundament Foundation, Tilburg, Netherlands; 2015 – 'Skulptur 2015', Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl, Germany; 'Terrapolis: NEON & Whitechapel Gallery', École Française d'Athènes, Athens; 2014 – 'Ceramic Spaces – Fontana, Prangenberg, Trockel, Schütte, Karstieß', Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany; 'Living in the Material World', Museum Haus Lange Haus Esters, Krefeld, Germany and Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck, Austria.

Markus Karstieß





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Dirty Corners, 2013
Ceramics, lustre glaze
184 × 70.5 × 70.5 cm
(72⅜ × 27¾ × 27¾ in
Installation view, 'Ceramic Spaces – Fontana, Prangenberg, Trockel, Schütte, Karstieß' exhibition, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany, 2014

Front: *Blauer und Schlange*, 2015
Glazed ceramics, glass
82 × 98 × 160 cm
(32⅜ × 38⅝ × 63 in)
Back: *Gigant–Klee-Wesen (Fetisch)*, 2015–16
Glazed ceramics
206 × 70 × 56 cm
(81⅛ × 27⅝ × 22⅛ in)
Installation view, Irden, Raketenstation Hombroich, Neuss, Germany, 2016

Kammer (Chamber), 2010
Glazed ceramics, expanded metal, steel
320 × 216 × 212 cm
(126 × 85⅛ × 83⅝ in)



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kus Karstieß

← *Satyr-Schaaf-Wesen (Fetisch)*, 2015
Ceramics, lustre glaze, steel
180 × 46 × 46 cm
(70 ¾ × 18 ⅛ × 18 ⅛ in)
Installation view, 'Terrapolis: NEON & Whitechapel Gallery' exhibition, École Française d'Athènes, Athens, 2015

→ *Der Goldtümpel (The Golden Pool)*, 2016
Glazed ceramic, gold, stainless steel chain
c.450 × 295 × 120 cm
(c.177 × 116 × 47 ¼ in)
Installation view, 'Luster – Clay in Sculpture Today' exhibition, Fundament Foundation at park De Oude Warande, Tilburg, Netherlands

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For British artist Rachel Kneebone, working with clay 'was not a choice' but something she has always done, since childhood. A graduate of London's Royal College of Art, Kneebone works exclusively with porcelain, her elaborate sculptural forms expressing both figurative and abstract elements. In *We Get Life From Putrefaction and Death* (2014) delicate limbs and organs protrude outwards like tendrils from a dense mass. A sculpted porcelain pedestal and orb provide a platform or support, from which the elements cascade like riotous, unruly guests at a party.

Kneebone's works are uniformly white. A particularly 'ambiguous' colour, according to the artist, it provides a reflective surface onto which viewers can project their thoughts and desires. Speaking about her practice, Kneebone talks of 'leaving interpretations open, incomplete', while 'the void, the crack' become recurring motifs, metaphorically as well as visually. Cracked, imperfect bases give way to tumbling limbs, while coherent forms – the curved arch of a human foot, for example – sit alongside unformed matter.

Kneebone's works evoke the in-between space of metamorphosis, the moment at which one thing transforms into another. Her later works such as *The Area on Whose Brink Silence Begins* (2015) reflect her long-standing interest in states of change, renewal and regrowth. Inspired by the classical mythology of Ovid, they depict transformations – flesh into wood and stone. Literature is a frequent departure point for the artist, who has drawn upon further diverse sources of inspiration including Dante, Rilke and Georges Bataille.

Art-historical references are also present in Kneebone's 'Lamentations' series (2010), which draw upon Michelangelo, and in works produced for her 2012 solo exhibition 'Rachel Kneebone: Regarding Rodin' at New York's Brooklyn Museum, which were shown alongside examples by the nineteenth-century French master Auguste Rodin. The push and pull of organic, figurative and abstract motifs, and the rupturing and cracking of the support structures generate a distinct sense of unease in Kneebone's art. Aspects of death and the erotic permeate the works; beauty and fear are not so much opposites as coexistent states, as hybrid phallic forms with human legs slide into a concentric, vortex-like pit in *The Descent* (2008).

Scale is also significant for Kneebone, who works with singular hand-wrought sculptures as well as large, composite structures. The towering sculpture *399 Days* (2012–13), so named after the duration of its construction, is a technical feat comprising multiple conjoined panels, combined with smaller pieces that are the result of single firings in the artist's studio kiln. Time is central to these works, which can take up to three months to complete, from their beginnings as soft, malleable clay to finished porcelain sculptures. Their lengthy, meticulous evolution is dictated by the medium, which – as Kneebone points out – is in a state of transformation just as much as her subject matter.
• Rachel Kent

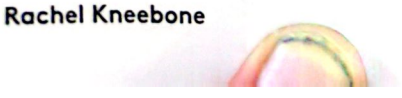
Rachel Kneebone Born 1973, Oxfordshire, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – Touchstones Rochdale, UK; 2017 – 'Ovid in Exile', White Cube, Hong Kong; 'White Cube at Glyndebourne', Glyndebourne Festival, Lewes, UK; 'Rachel Kneebone at the V&A', Victoria & Albert Museum, London; 2014 – '399 Days', White Cube Bermondsey, London. 2012 – 'Rachel Kneebone: Regarding Rodin', Brooklyn Museum, New York; 2011 – 'Still Life', Daniel Blau, Munich; 2010 – 'Lamentations 2010', White Cube, London; 2009 – 'The Descent', White Cube, London; 2006 – Madder Rose Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'From here to eternity', Maison Particulière, Brussels; 'Flesh', York Art Gallery, UK; 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2015 – 'Classicicity', Breese Little, London; 'Lust for Life', Galeri Andersson Sandström, Stockholm; 'Obsession', Maison Particulière, Brussels; 2014 – 'Obsession', Maison Particulière, Brussels; 'KILN', Leila Heller Gallery, New York; 'Freud and Eros: Love, Lust and Longing', Freud Museum, London; 2013 – '3am: wonder, paranoia and the restless night', The Bluecoat, Liverpool, and touring to Chapter, Cardiff; The Exchange Newlyn, Penzance, UK.







Rachel Kneebone



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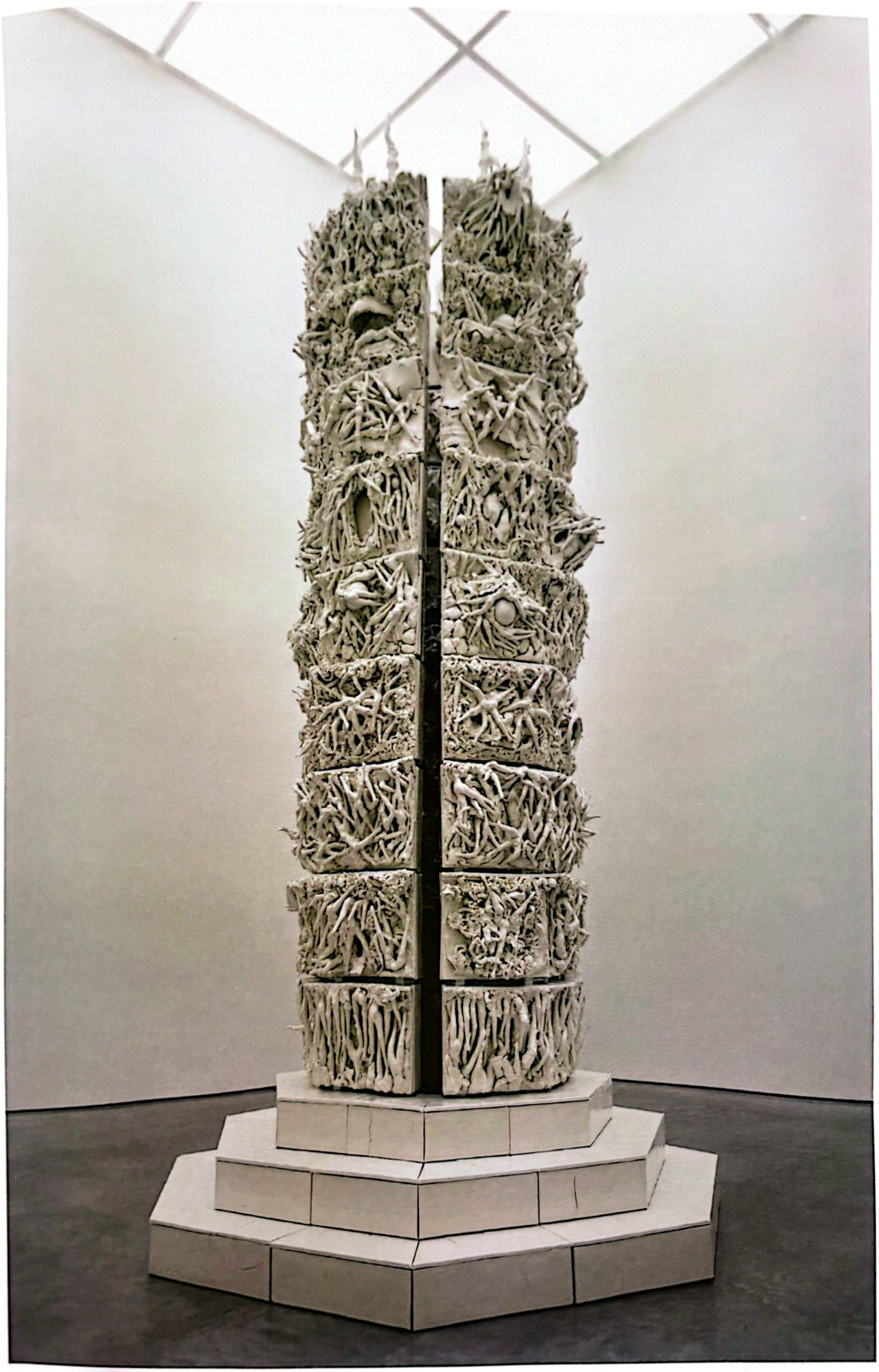

The solitude in the depth of her being begins the world again but only begins it for herself, 2014
Porcelain
66 × 72 × 61 cm
(26 × 28 ¾ × 24 in)

We Get Life From Putrefaction and Death, 2014
Porcelain
63.5 × 57.5 × 76.4 cm
(25 × 22 ⅝ × 30 ⅛ in)

The Area on Whose Brink Silence Begins, 2015
Porcelain
54 × 76 × 52 cm
(21 ¼ × 29 ⅞ × 20 ½ in)

399 *Days*, 2012–13
Porcelain and mild steel
540 × 287 × 283 cm
(212 ⅝ × 113 × 111 ½ in)

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Problems lie at the heart of John Kørner's practice. He haseven titled his works and exhibitions with the repeated use of this word. Art serves to point out the problems that surround us and Kørner insists on its prerogative to raise problems rather than to solve them. The 'problem' is a matter of content in Kørner's work – pointing the finger at pressing issues – and also takes literal form as strange elongated, nonfigurative sculptures, blots, blobs and painted dots on canvas or wobbly objects. He is an artist with a profound interest in society, historically and now, but for him art must be relevant to the present day. He relentlessly focuses attention on the pressing issues of today's global reality: war, prostitution, family patterns, alcohol abuse, or the mere problem of carrying on one's private life. Originally trained as a painter, his work contains a long line of media. The clay that he uses has certain formal qualities; it is easily modulated yet resistant, and being a medium also of the everyday it speaks to multiple contexts.

Early in his career, Kørner began to work in complex installations and accumulations of objects in different media. Some of these were stage-like, others were arranged as environments that challenged preconceived notions of how painting and sculpture should be displayed and how viewers should interact with them. This led him to setting up *Kørners Kontor* (Kørner's office), an alternative space for exhibitions and art-related events in Copenhagen in the late 1990s.

The interplay of colour and form are important aspects of Kørner's art, regardless of the medium or material employed. In his ceramic objects, painted glazes, sculptural form and surface texture are carefully combined to resist straightforward and rigid interpretation; for example, *Problem* (2016), part of a larger series, sees a turquoise glaze dribbling and melting down a cylindrical form, graduating through strata-like layers of black down to bright, lava orange. The *Problem* ceramics, often shaped as near-abstract, unmodulated stretched forms, stand in complex stage-like installations, suggesting some kind of performative participation, actively pointing to issues that affect us all, drawing parallels with the world stage.

Kørner explores how preconceived ideas and traditions surrounding the medium of clay differ from those surrounding sculpture or other three-dimensional work. Clay seems more insistent, addressing us directly as spectators of a scene. Kørner presents the viewer with nonfigurative, elemental forms that symbolize a kind of prethought, alongside simple figurative elements that evoke universally recognizable things. As sculptural objects they embody the problem-raising role of art, as seen, for example, in the interior commission named *Kørner's Lounge* (2008) for the Royal Playhouse in Copenhagen, where he designed the lounge itself, filling it with his artworks. Placed in vitrines, a group of ceramic objects stand side by side, reminiscent of prehistoric forms or artefacts from archaeological excavations put on display. Other presentations contain figurative objects set in explicitly narrative scenarios, such as *Mr. and Mrs. Smith at Work* (2006) or *(skeleton)* (2008). Whether displayed on their own or alongside other media, Kørner's ceramic objects and settings resolutely require the viewer to engage with them, sparking both quiet contemplation and lively discussion. • Anne Kielgast

John Kørner Born 1967, Aarhus, Denmark. Lives and works in Copenhagen. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; 'Blue Bedroom', Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen; 2016 – 'Life Attacks You', Brandts, Odense, Denmark; 'Apple Bombs', Victoria Miro Gallery, London; 'Outdoor Struggling', Museum Belvédère, Oranjewoud, Netherlands; 2015 – 'Graphic Works 1996–2015', Odsherred Kunstmuseum, Asnæs, Denmark and touring within Denmark; 2013 – 'The Family', Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, Copenhagen; 'CAUGHT, HEART', Herning Museum of Art, Denmark; 'Fallen Fruit from Frisland', Victoria Miro Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Natur Encounters', J.F. Willumsens Museum, Frederikssund, Denmark; 'Collection & Contemporary', Skagens Museum, Denmark; 'Stone Talking/Der Stein Spricht', Lyonel Feininger Galerie, Quedlinburg, Germany; 2014 – 'HÄR/NU', Artipelag, Stockholm; 'Fluid Flesh', Nordic Contemporary, Paris; 'Psyco Futurism', Scandinavian Institute, New York; 2013 – 'CHICKEN OR BEEF', The Hole, New York.

John Kørner





†† *Mr. and Mrs. Smith at Work*, 2006
Acrylic on canvas plus mixed media objects
Installation view, '2006 Problems' exhibition, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, 2006

† *(skeleton)*, 2008
Ceramics, candles
Installation view, Charlottenborg, Copenhagen

↗ *(Untitled)*, 2004
Installation view, 'The Problem of Performing' exhibition, GI.Strand, Copenhagen, 2004

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As a young girl, Klara Kristalova spent many hours walking through the woods surrounding her home in Sweden, with only her dog as a companion. Woodland creatures like owls figure prominently in her ceramics, as do porcelain-skinned girls with pre-Raphaelite hair that often seems matted down, as though from a recent dip in murky waters. Her work speaks of both a desire to hold onto girlhood and a budding curiosity about the darker paths of womanhood.

In some cases, this process of growth is sublimated into a transmogrification: a figure perched on a ledge has the body of a girl and the head of a horse. Kristalova has spoken of such human-animal hybrids as 'an image of the whole girl-person', perhaps another way of saying that some creature or another is one's 'spirit animal'. Her 2014 exhibition at Lehmann Maupin gallery in New York, called 'Big Girl Now', featured, among other things, black-maned twins (*Darkness and Light*, 2011); a girl who is half-owl, with skin of white feathers (*Birdwoman*, 2013); a girl sprouting tree branches (*Skinny*, 2011). Where do we grow from here?

Kristalova has said she was drawn to ceramic because it 'was seen as a low material, and not serious enough, especially when glazed. I felt that created a free space for me.' But there was another reason too. She has described how, 'I ... wanted my stories to have body', and indeed the three-dimensional quality of her pieces is key to the experience of them: to be in a room with her often sympathetic, fantastical creatures is to feel that one of them might take a breath. Before becoming an artist, Kristalova trained as an interpreter, and you could say she is still interpreting, turning stories into ceramic. In one work, a girl's face is alive with moths the size of her palms. In the manner of many fairy tales, it is at once magical and macabre.

Pressed by interviewers to name the stories that have resonated with her – the ones from which her ceramics might derive – Kristalova has pointed to old Czech tales her mother read to her before her death when Kristalova was six years old, as well as some Hans Christian Andersen and the Swedish writer Selma Lagerlöf. Dracula, old DC Comics and Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* also come up. But her stories, she has been quick to add, come just as often from everyday life. In her 2016 exhibition at Galerie Perrotin in Hong Kong, there was a piece called *Snowmom* (2016), the typical three-sphere form of the snowman but a female version, surrounded by open-mouthed snowballs: her spawn. Perhaps this piece points the way forward for Kristalova, as her girls move into the next phase of life. • Sarah Douglas

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lara Kristalova Born 1967, Czechoslovakia. Lives and orks in Norrtälje, Sweden. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 017 – GL Strand, Copenhagen; 'Slottet', Galleri Magnus arlsson, Stockholm; 2016 – 'Hello Stranger', Galerie errotin, Hong Kong; 2014 – Klara Kristalova: Turning Into one, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida; omise', Bror Hjorths Hus, Uppsala, Sweden; 2012 – onniers Konsthall, Stockholm; Goteborgs Konstmuseum, eden; 2011 – 'Sounds of Dogs and Youth', Lehmann upin, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 09 – SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico; 2009 – 'Where the owls nd their days', Alison Jacques Gallery, London. ected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Sisters of the Moon', IAC Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; 'In Search of the sent', Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Helsinki; 2015 – dora's Vox: Klara Kristalova, Veronika & Sandra ques De La Horra', Prague City Gallery; 'CERAMIX', Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and ring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la amique, France; 'NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists n the Rubell Family Collection', Rubell Family Collection, Miami; 2014 – 'I Like It! What Is It?', Kulturhuset, kholm; 2013 – 'Body and Soul: New International mics', Museum of Art and Design, New York; 2011 – Work', MOMA, San Francisco.

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ra Kristalova



† *Birdwoman*, 2013
Glazed and unglazed stoneware
132 × 38 × 36 cm
(52 × 14 ⅞ × 14 ⅛ in)

↗ *Slow Dance*, 2011
Glazed stoneware
76 × 50 × 38 cm
(29 ⅞ × 19 ⅝ × 14 ⅞ in)

↗↗ *Skinny*, 2011
Glazed porcelain
75 × 20 × 15 cm
(29 ½ × 7 ⅞ × 5 ⅞ in)

→ *Darkness and Light*, 2011
Glazed porcelain
43 × 30 × 23 cm
(16 ⅞ × 11 ¾ × 9 ⅛ in)

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→ Installation view, 'Happy Birthday Galerie Perrotin/25 years' exhibition, Tripostal, Lille, France, 2014



'stalova

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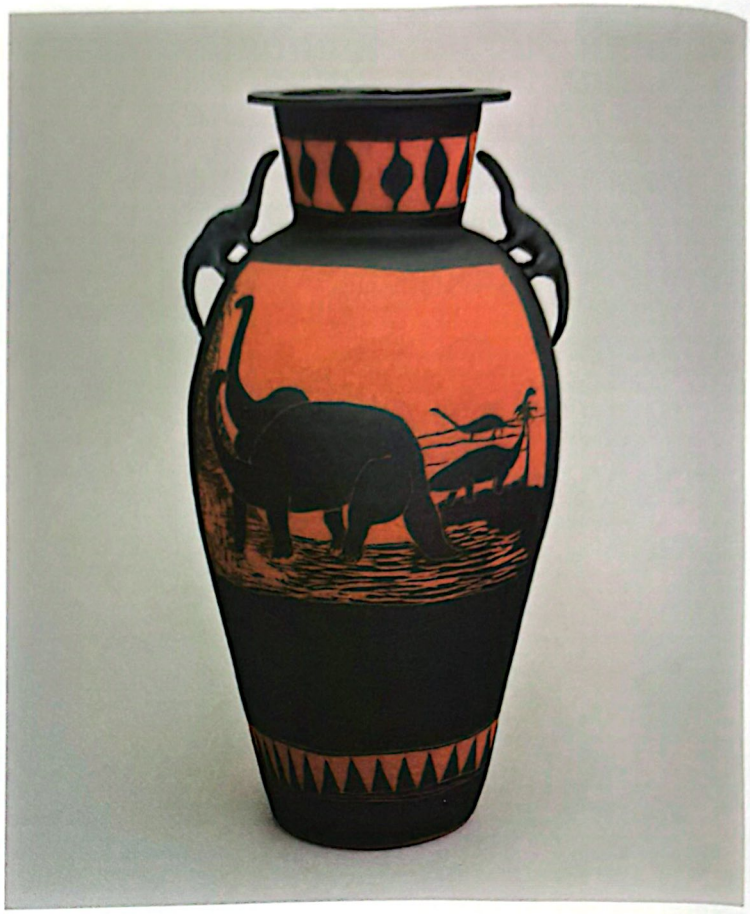
Shio Kusaka's ceramics are renegade in unassuming ways. Against the art world's preference for critique and issues, her modestly scaled vessels offer the frisson of guilelessly resembling upmarket craft, at least outwardly. Yet soon enough one gets ensnared in the deeper pleasures of Kusaka's wrong-yet-right aesthetic, for example her pleasingly imperfect moulding notched with wobbly grids (her gold standard is the Japanese coil pottery of the Yayoi period, for its loose and lively curves, but she also reveres the quiet, hand-drawn geometry of Agnes Martin). Observing what's emerged from Kusaka's kiln over the last six or seven years, you can recognize a feinting stylistic and iconographic restlessness that, in turn, reflects an openness to chance inspiration.

This freewheeling approach runs through Kusaka's history. Born in Morioka, Japan, she moved to North America aged twenty to study business in San Francisco, took an accounting job, relocated on a whim to Colorado and found pottery first via community college, taking the randomly selected Pottery 101 course only so she wouldn't have to go back to Japan, and then attending the University of Washington. After moving to Los Angeles and, for a spell, assisting a sculptor, Kusaka initially became widely visible around 2010 for her vases, pots and bowls, alluringly though understatedly coloured and glazed, and arranged on plinths. More recently she's been wont to exhibit, say, parades of little porcelain animals – penguins, lions, baboons, cheetahs, elephants, unicorns – on the advice of her young daughter, turning a previously family-oriented practice into a public one. This domestic permeability doesn't stop there. Kusaka's work and that of her artist husband Jonas Wood frequently intermingle, his motifs (a basketball, for instance) wandering into her decorated surfaces, hers into his; his versions of her work back into hers. 'We both like imperfections in our own way,' she has said.

Within her open agenda, little appears off-limits. If Kusaka wants to start incorporating painted imitations of woodgrain into her pots, she will, and similarly she might choose to engrave a sober, classical-looking black vase with images of cartoon witches, make one pot that recalls a slice of watermelon, or, inspired by a picture book her daughter brought home, decorate another with sculpted dinosaurs and landscapes and cast it in the two-tone aesthetics of ancient Greek earthenware. There's a winking effrontery in this. Kusaka's mute but sociable arrays of fired clay prompt little short-circuits in the mind, stymieing its habitual tendency to decode art and exposing monolithic systems of reception. Mostly, though, we're caught up in a category shift that positions the domestic as a credible source of delicacy, subtlety and complexity, a place whose unassuming potentials are worth considering given that we spend so much time there. As the author of the Japanese spiritual guide, the *Hagekure*, notes, 'Matters of great concern should be treated lightly. Matters of small concern should be treated seriously.' Kusaka does both. • Martin Herbert





Shio Kusaka Born 1972, Morioka, Japan. Lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Shio Kusaka', The Modern Institute, Glasgow; 'Shio Kusaka', Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; 2014 – 'Shio Kusaka', Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; 'Shio Kusaka', Greengrassi, London; 2012 – The Modern Institute, Glasgow; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; 2013 – 'Shio Kusaka', Anton Kern Gallery, New York; 2005 – Tortoise, Los Angeles. Selected Two-Person and Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Shio Kusaka and Jonas Wood', Museum Voorlinden, Netherlands. 'Recent Acquisitions in Asian Art', Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio; 2016 – 'Going Public: International Art Collectors in Sheffield', The Esplanade, Museums Sheffield, UK; 2015 – 'Shio Kusaka and Jonas Wood', Karma, New York; 'Blackwelder, Jonas Wood and Shio Kusaka', Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong; 2014 – 'FIRE!', Venus Over Manhattan, New York; 'Displayed', Anton Kern Gallery, New York; 'Whitney Biennial', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

usaka

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(dinosaur 23), 2014
Stoneware
70.5 × 37.5 × 36.8 cm
(27¾ × 14¾ × 14½ in)

(dinosaur 35), 2016
Stoneware
64.1 × 34.3 × 34.3 cm
(25¼ × 13½ × 13½ in)

Installation view,
Shane Campbell Gallery,
Chicago, 2014

Overleaf:
Installation view, Blum & Poe,
Los Angeles, 2016

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The titles of two of Takuro Kuwata's recent solo shows – 'Dear Tea Bowl' (2015) and 'From Tea Bowl' (2016) – recall the American ceramic artist Peter Voulkos's famously assertive designation of his *Rocking Pot* (1956): 'I claim this as a pot'. Just as Voulkos's claim – applied to his deliberately unstable, punctured form – strained conventional notions of ceramic propriety, Kuwata's works bear little resemblance to the tapering, graspable form of the vessel to which his exhibition titles refer. Though some of his pieces recall Western-style mugs with handles, or tall jugs, most of them are not discernably vessels at all. At the same time, both the shapes of these works and their wildly varied, uneven surfaces do, in their apparent tolerance for explosive irregularity and oozing asymmetry, share something of the Japanese *wabi-sabi* philosophy of imperfection, of which tea bowls are often considered a prime emanation.

This emphasis on a certain formal instability, and the ambivalent relationship with tradition it evinces, are recurrent themes in Kuwata's work. The artist has cited as an inspiration one vase by the master craftsman Toyozo Arakawa on which the glaze had been applied so thickly that 'its edge was slightly coming off'; in many of Kuwata's own works, cracked chunks of glaze seem ready to peel or be shucked off. Another signature gesture is his use of *Ishihaze* (meaning 'stone explosion'), a technique in which small rocks, sand or other impurities are left in the clay before firing so that, under heat pressure, they erupt through its surface. Traditionally this was used to produce a speckled effect; in Kuwata's hands, huge jutting masses poke up and spill over areas of smooth colour.

His use of colour is eye-poppingly lush, but rarely natural, sharing something of the industrial richness of Ron Nagle, whose practice draws more on hot rod paints than natural pigments. A row of Kuwata's ceramics can give the queasy impression of a bunch of radioactive fruits. Born in Hiroshima, it would be tempting to interpret many such aspects of his practice in terms of national trauma and devastation; indeed even his lavish use of gilding – the large, smooth sheets of gold, or delicate, sweat-like droplets which adorn many works – can be seen as a kind of armoured defence. And yet some of his most distinctive recent works – vaguely phallic, megalithic cones, taller than the average man – have an organic quality, recalling mountain peaks or ancient pines.

Kuwata has spoken of wanting to make work 'that reflects our time'. Rich in tradition yet utterly unconventional; evoking natural forms while being proudly crafted and deliberately shaped, disquietingly violent but arrestingly beautiful, his multiple contradictions seem indeed fitting for a paradoxical era. • Matthew McLean





Takuro Kuwata Born 1981, Hiroshima, Japan. Lives and works in Toki, Gifu, Japan. Selected Solo exhibitions: 2017 – KOSAKU KANECHIKA, Tokyo; 2016 – 'From Tea Bowl', Alison Jacques Gallery, London; 2015 – 'Takuro Kuwata: Indoor stone garden "Heaven"', The Sogetsu Kaikan 1F, Tokyo; 2014 – 'From Nature', Pierre Marie Giraud, Brussels; 2013 – 'Flavor of Nature', Salon 94, New York; 2011 – 'Furu Furu Karafuru', Rakusui-tei Museum of Art, Toyama, Japan; 2010 – Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo; 2008 – Ginza Kuroda Touen Gallery, Tokyo. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'PUNK', Rakusui-tei Museum of Art, Toyama, Japan; 2015 – 'ORGANIC SCULPTURE', Alison Jacques Gallery, London; 'Japanese Kōgei | Future Forward', Museum of Arts and Design, New York; 2014 – 'FIRE!', Venus Manhattan, New York; 2013 – '10 Under 40', ISTANBUL'74; 'Master Teabowls of Our Days', Musee Tomo, Tokyo; 2012 – 'Art Crafting Towards The Future', 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; 2011 – 'Paul Clay' Salon 94, New York.

Takuro Kuwata

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Tea bowl, 2013
Porcelain, stone, glaze, pigment, gold
13.5 × 16 × 14 cm
(5 ¼ × 6 ¼ × 5 ½ in)

Tea bowl, 2015
Porcelain, stone, glaze, pigment, gold
11.8 × 14.3 × 13.9 cm
(4 ¼ × 5 ⅝ × 5 ½ in)

† Installation view, 'Flavor of Nature' exhibition, Salon 94 Bowery, New York, 2013

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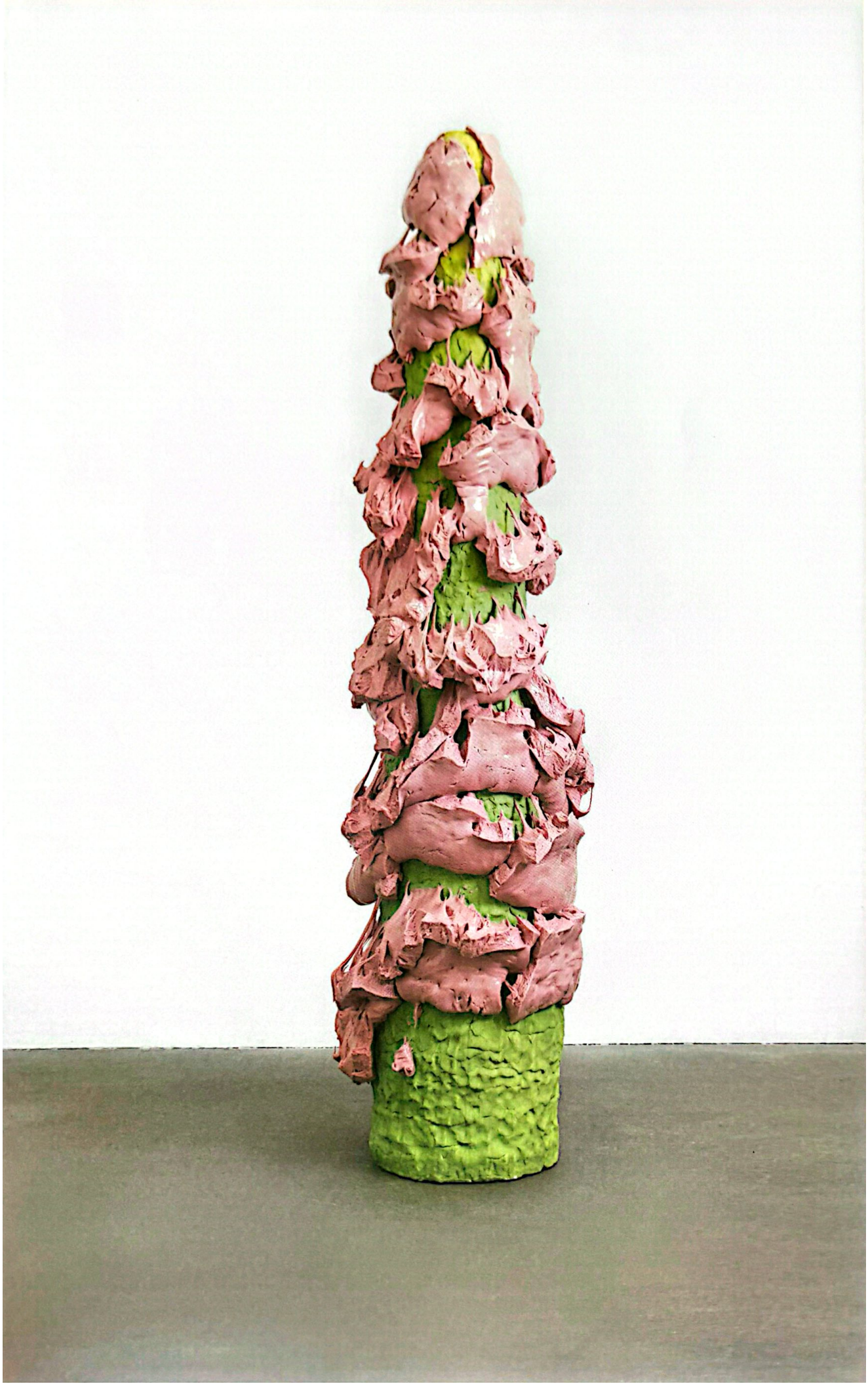

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Liz Larner explores the properties and potential of sculpture in a variety of materials and techniques, but ceramics have perhaps offered her the most consistent and fecund area of investigation over the last twenty years. Ceramics seem an odd choice for an artist who studied at Cal Arts in the 1980s, where faculty and students were famously uninterested in material exploration or craftsmanship in favour of a more conceptual approach to art. But it was also in Southern California in the mid-century where Peter Voulkos and the Otis Group completely redefined American ceramics and brought them into the realm of modern sculpture. Larner is well aware of this tradition, and while her peripatetic exploration of sculptural form has often been driven by the properties of a chosen material, it is perhaps equally compelled by an interest in process and transience.

Clay's transformative properties and the role of chance in the shaping and firing process are perhaps a natural progression from Larner's early 'Cultures' series. These petri dish sculptures involved placing disparate objects (for example an orchid, buttermilk and a penny) in an agar solution and letting nature, and bacteria, take its course over a period of days or weeks. This unpredictable yet controlled process has parallels with the way she works with clay.

Her first ceramic works, which she began in 1996, were a series of cast porcelain sculptures in upturned crescent configurations she calls 'smiles'. They are a good example of the way Larner uses material and language to both shape and challenge our comprehension of an object. These unglazed, geometric works are formal explorations of volume and space but, as the titles suggest, they are also studies in gesture and even attitude. Perhaps she is toying with the notion of art as expression and its potential to bite. Smiles convey pleasure, joy or happiness, but Larner's 'smiles' show teeth.

In 2009 Larner began working on a series of wall-mounted ceramic slab sculptures, the earliest of which were abstract petal-like shapes formed by draping the slab over an object. Using oil paint, she brought to these works her masterful understanding of the way colour and form interact sculpturally, an understanding she likely began to develop while auditing Ken Price's classes at the University of Southern California in the 1990s. But it was in her next series that Larner really began to push the technical properties of clay, finding poetic and physical resonance in the marriage of material, form and colour. Usually horizontal, these abstract shapes – such as *ii (inflexion)* (2013–15) and *iv (inflexion)* (2014–15) – are rolled slabs covered with pigmented epoxy. Unlike glaze, the epoxy sits atop the clay and its translucence reveals the fissures and surface texture while the glossy colour suggests alluvial flows. Vertical creases, folds and outright ruptures that create variations of forms that Larner categorizes as caesura, passages, subductions, inflexions and mantles. These are literary and geological terms that use language to connect the human time we experience to the geological time inherent to clay. • Mary Ceruti





Liz Larner Born 1960, Sacramento, California. Lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Liz Larner: X', Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; 2015 – 'Liz Larner', Art Institute of Chicago, IL; 2014 – 'Liz Larner', Regen Projects; 2001 – 'Liz Larner', The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; 1998 – 'I Thought I Saw a Pussycat', MAK, Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna; 1997 – Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Art of Our Time', The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; 2014 – 'Nasher XChange', various sites, Dallas, presented by the Nasher Sculpture Center; 2007 – 'The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society', Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville, Spain; 2006 – 'Whitney Biennial 2006', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 'Two or Three or Something: Maria Lassnig, Liz Larner', Kunsthaus Graz, Austria; 1992 – 'Helter Skelter', MoCA, Los Angeles; 1989 – 'Whitney Biennial 1989', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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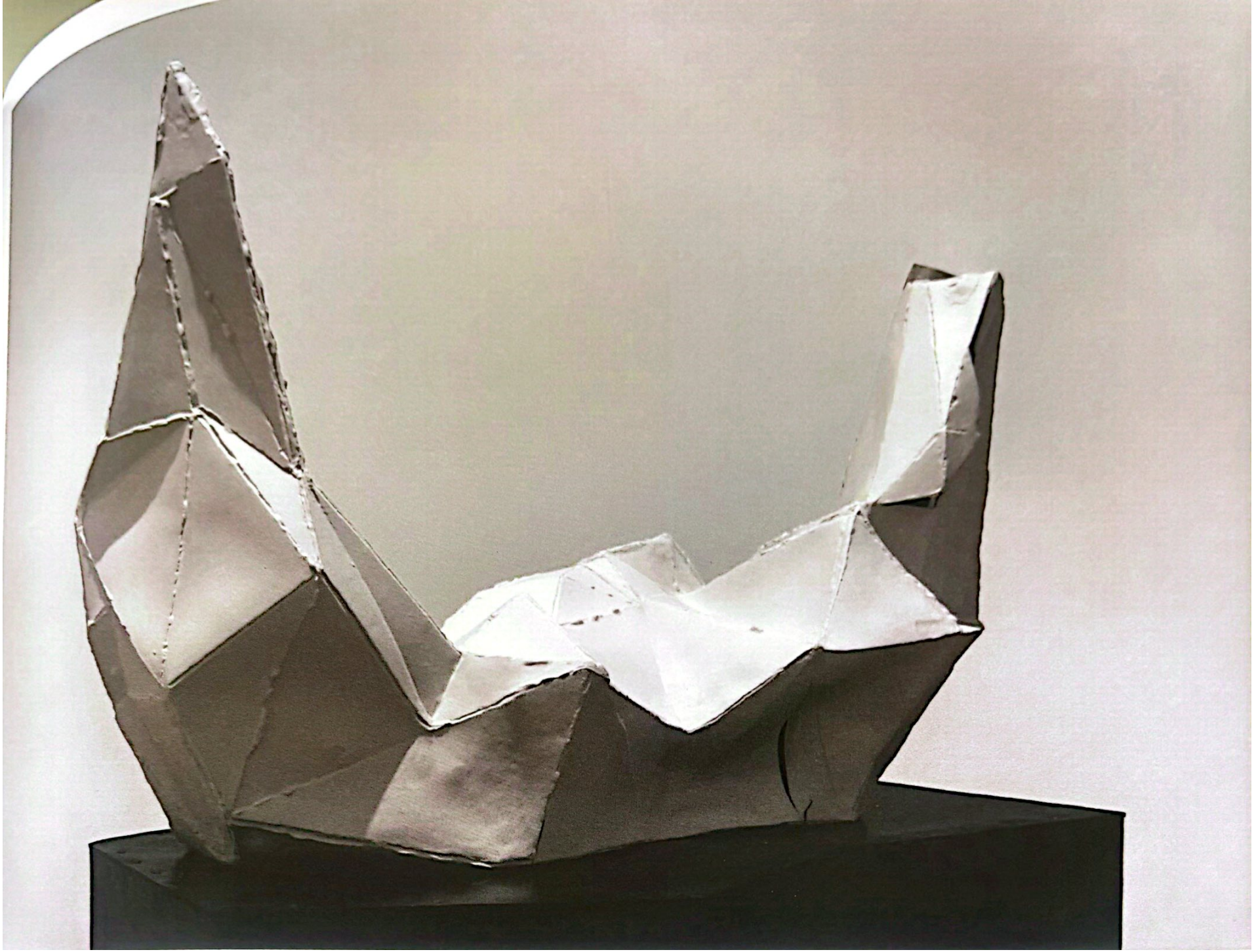

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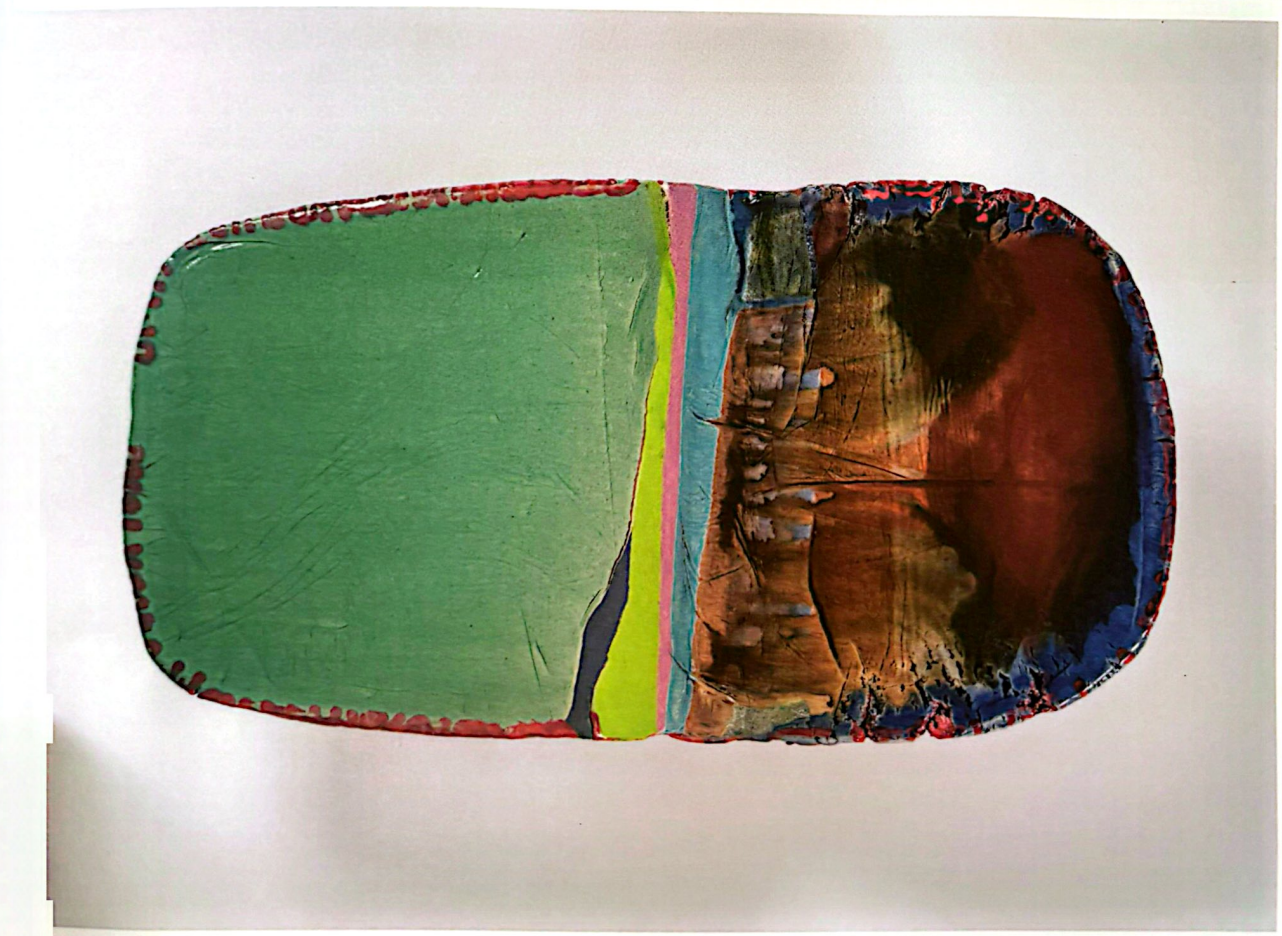

↖ *iv (inflexion)*, 2014–15
Ceramic, epoxy, pigment, stones and minerals
54 × 94.6 × 22.9 cm
(21¼ × 37¼ × 9 in)

← *ii (inflexion)*, 2013–15
Ceramic, epoxy and pigment
46.4 × 85.7 × 26.7 cm
(18¼ × 33¾ × 10½ in)

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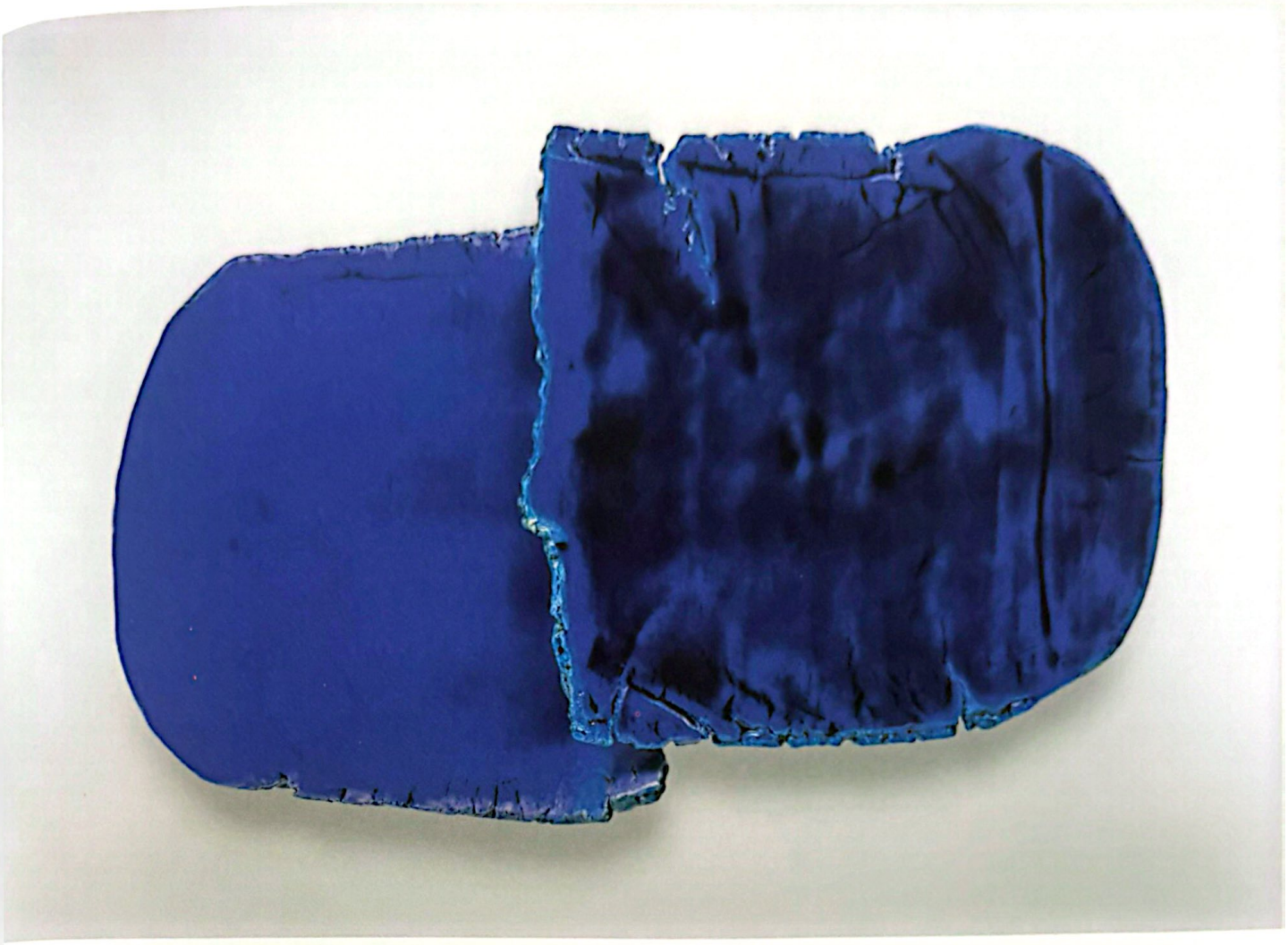



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'It's always been taboo to announce my audience is black women,' the artist Simone Leigh has said, but indeed a celebration of black female beauty and self-determination lies at the heart of her sculptural and multidisciplinary work. Employing a rich matrix of cultural signifiers from African, African-American and Caribbean history, she crafts works in clay such as *Hortense* and *Untitled II (Anatomy of Architecture series)* (both 2016) to recall traumas from the past and to suggest alternatives for a future that empowers black women.

Raised in Chicago by Jamaican parents, Leigh was studying feminist and post-colonial theory as a philosophy student when she came across a ceramics studio and became fascinated by the tradition of vernacular American pottery, and its 'orientalist tendencies'. This interest then broadened during a residency at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, where she conducted scholarship on West African ceramics from an ethnographic perspective, as anonymous works made primarily by women.

In her own sculpture, this melange of influences can be read through her use of totemic objects that are freighted with the legacy of slavery. Since 2007, for instance, Leigh has been using watermelons – which she sees as having inextricably racist associations – to cast moulds of large, pendulous breasts, sculptures of women whose billowing dresses recall sub-Saharan grass huts and other meeting places, and oversized cowrie shells. That latter motif, referencing the long practice in Africa and the Caribbean of using the shells as a form of currency (sometimes paid in exchange for slaves), formed the centrepiece of Leigh's landmark 2012 show at The Kitchen in New York, 'You Don't Know Where Her Mouth Has Been', that featured sixty-five of her large porcelain shells. Often her work is lavishly decorated, such as her busts of black women adorned with tiny flowers, and each element – like a scattering of crystalline salt or a dusting of whiteface-like pigment – is replete with layered iconography.

Leigh has in recent years broken new ground in social practice. Her *Free People's Medical Clinic* (2014), an acclaimed piece commissioned by Creative Time (and later repeated at New York's New Museum), that took its inspiration from the story of a laid-off daycare worker named Esmin Green who died in hospital waiting room after being unattended by a doctor for twenty-four hours and ignored by staff. Seeing this as yet another instance of the medical community's indifference to the suffering of black women, Leigh set up a temporary installation in the form of a functioning holistic healing clinic offering everything from acupuncture to yoga and herbalism – services that 'would have helped prevent Esmin Green from working herself to death' as Leigh said. Such forms of sheltering women's spaces are also echoed across her installation work, such as her *Cupboard* series (2014), which recall the shape of grass huts and comprise porcelain, stoneware and wire – modelled after sub-Saharan African meeting places – and that she adorns with her freighted, shell-like cowrie sculptures. • Andrew Goldstein

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Simone Leigh Born 1967, Chicago. Lives and works in Brooklyn. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Hammer Projects', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'inHarlem', The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; 'Psychic Friends Network', Tate Exchange at Tate Modern, London; 'I ran to the rock to hide my face the rock cried out no hiding place', Kansas City Art Institute; 'The Waiting Room', New Museum, New York; 2014 – 'Free People's Medical Clinic' in 'funkgodjazzandmedicine: Black Radical Brooklyn', Creative Time and Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn; 'Gone South', Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; 2012 – 'You Don't Know Where Her Mouth Has Been', The Kitchen, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Round 46: BWA for BLM', curated by Simone Leigh, Project Row Houses, Houston; 2016 – 'Energy Change: Connecting to Ana Mendieta', Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe; 'The Grace Jones Project', Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco; 'In the Power of Your Care', The 8th Floor, The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, New York; 'Unconventional Clay: Engaged in Change', Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri; 2015 – 'Greater New York', MoMA PS1, New York; 2014 – 'As We Were Saying: Art and Identity in the Age of "Post"', Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York.





Simone Leigh

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ıtitled VI (Anatomy of
chitecture series), 2016
rracotta, glaze
.4 × 33 × 33 cm
3 × 13 × 13 inches)

ortense, 2016
rracotta, India ink, porcelain
nd 14-karat gold lustre
6 × 40.6 × 40.6 cm
26 × 16 × 16 in)

Cupboard, 2014
Porcelain, stoneware, wire
548.6 × 365.8 cm
(216 × 144 in)
Installation view, 'Simone Leigh:
Gone South' exhibition, Atlanta
Contemporary Art Center



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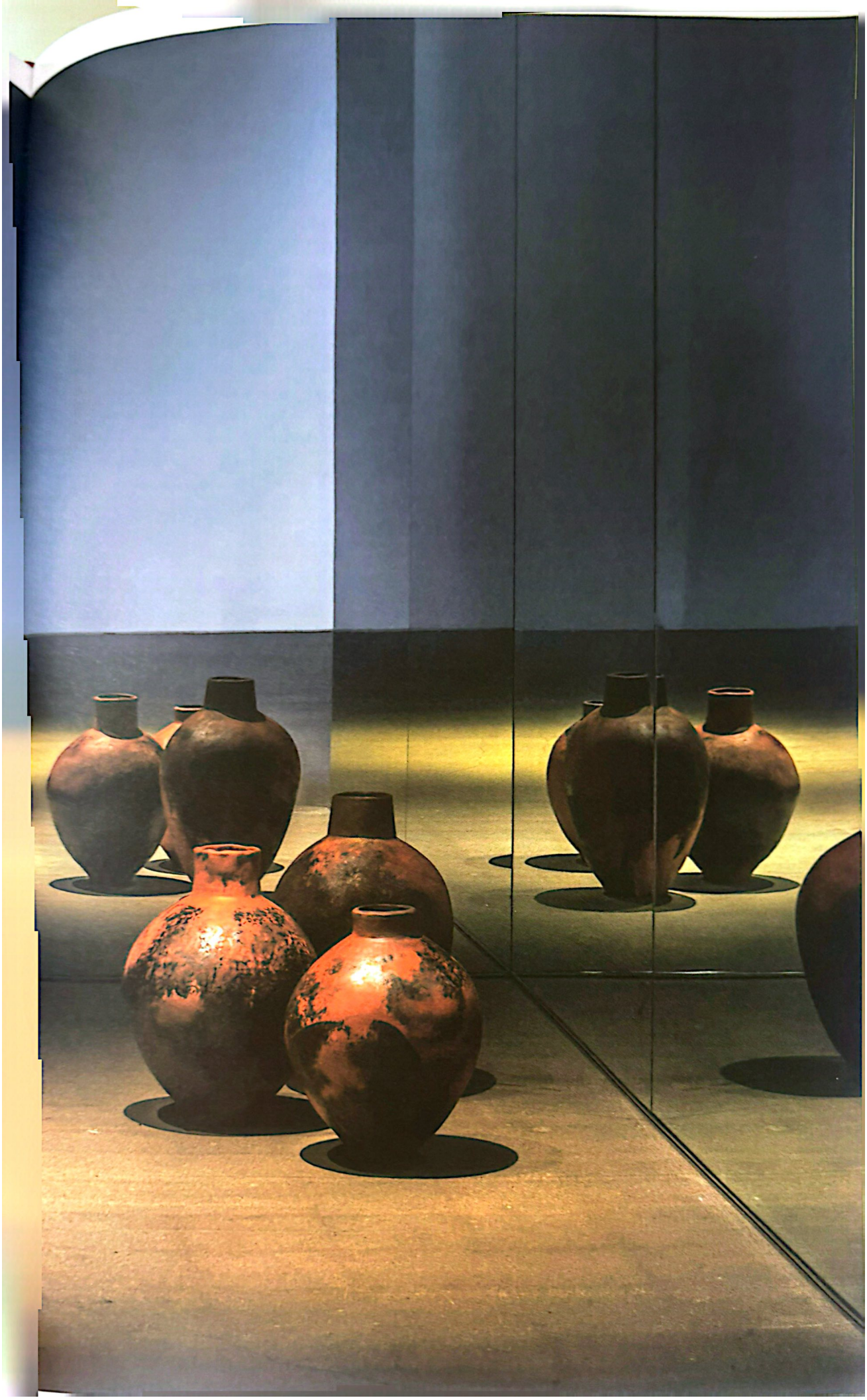

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Considered one of Singapore's leading ceramic and performance artists, Jason Lim has exhibited all over the world; he represented his country in the 2007 Venice Biennale with *Just Dharma*, a chandelier of 1,500 porcelain lotuses that he intentionally allowed to crash to the ground during a short performance, leaving the debris on display for the rest of the exhibition. Exploring ideas of birth, death and rebirth, this line of enquiry was continued in another performance work entitled *Still/Life* (2009) for which unfired clay vessels were made and installed in glass vitrines filled with water. Over time they eventually dissolved, returning to their original state.

Originally, however, Lim's performative use of the ceramic medium was brought about by practical needs. Returning to Singapore after taking a ceramics degree in London in the early 1990s, he was unable to procure a studio; the ephemeral nature of performance therefore allowed him to produce work without the need for a physical space. By making and unmaking his objects during the course of live actions, Lim was able to continue working with clay while simultaneously investigating ideas of permanence and impermanence. The medium has thus acted as an important conduit for exploring the tensions and shifting natures of objects and bodies in real time, as well as the energies exchanged between artist and material.

Now with his own studio, Lim has been making porcelain and ceramic sculpture inspired by his Chinese Buddhist heritage, as well as by nature and the role of objects when they are incorporated into today's society. His 'Landscape Studies' series (2013), produced after a residency in Fuping Pottery Art village near Xi'An in China in 2012, reworks *shan sui* or traditional Chinese landscape ink painting through an inventive approach to medium. The 'Landscape Studies' series are reminiscent of solitary mountain tops and lonely trees; as philosophical studies of landscape that connect thought with form, these small clay sculptures rely more on memory than observation. The almost meditative approach Lim brings to their making is revealed by the intensely close-up physical viewing required to experience each work.

Others of Lim's ceramics depart from the use of moulded, glazed and undulating clay and focus on harsher, more spontaneous aesthetics. Hybrid sculptures are made up of discarded kiln bricks, taken from an old wooden kiln during a period of repair and combined with nails that originally came from wooden crates that had been broken up and used for fuel in the firing process. When the planks were thrown into the firebox, the nails randomly melted into organic shapes that resembled treetops – something Lim discovered and was creatively drawn to when he cleared the ashes out for the next firing. Suggesting craggy and difficult terrain, these stylized landscapes repurpose rejected objects and turn them into poignant ideas about the cycle of life. This interest in a desolate and imperfect beauty is informed by the artist's interest in *wabi-sabi*, a Japanese aesthetic based on the same principles. They reflect Lim's enduring obsession with the ceramic form, Eastern philosophies and his own personal musings on everyday experience through a long and multifaceted career. • Eva McGovern-Basa

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Jason Lim Born 1966, Singapore, Malaysia. Lives and works in Singapore. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2014 – 'Tempus Fugit (Time Flies)', Gajah Gallery, Singapore; 2013 – 'Bukit Musings', Gajah Gallery; 2011 – 'New Works in Ceramics', The Hub, National Centre for Craft & Design, Seaford, UK; 'Duet with Still/Life', Galeria Labirynt, Lubin, Poland; 2008 – 'Still/Life', Post Museum, Singapore. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Archaeology of the Present', Gajah Gallery; 2016 – 'Bantul Art Summit', Gajah Gallery Yogyakarta, Indonesia; 2012 – 'Interpretation: A Flog of Birdies', Singapore Art Museum; 2010 – 'Là-bas Biennale', Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; 2009 – 'Live Action Gothenberg 09', Museum of World Culture, Goth-enburg, Sweden; 'Ceramics Road of Southeast Asia', Taipei Country Yingge Ceramics Museum, Taipei, Taiwan; 2007 – 'Figments, Fiction, and Fantasies', 52nd Venice Biennale.



† *Majestic's Dharma*, 2008
Porcelain and lighting accessories
300 cm
(118 ¼ in)

↗ Clockwise from top left:

Landscape Studies 1, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
16 × 10 × 11 cm
(6 ¼ × 4 × 4 ¼ in)

Landscape Studies 3, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
15 × 7 × 21 cm
(6 × 2¾ × 8 ¼ in)

Landscape Studies 8, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
14 × 8 × 12 cm
(5 ½ × 3 ¼ × 4¾ in)

Landscape Studies 10, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
14 × 9 × 16cm
(5 ½ × 3 ½ × 6 ¼ in)

Landscape Studies 9, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
12 × 8 × 13 cm
(4¾ × 3 ¼ × 5 ¼ in)

Landscape Studies 6, 2013
Kiln bricks and molten metal
19 × 11 × 15 cm
(7 ½ × 4 ¼ × 6 in)

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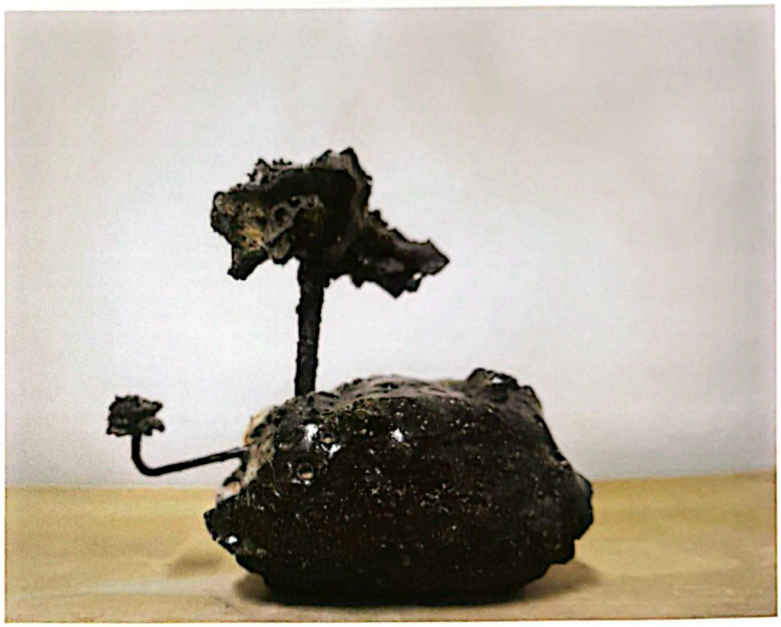





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An Te Liu's cast earthenware sculpture *Obsolete Figure in Space* (2013) will have a personal resonance for anyone who has ever purchased an Apple iMac computer. The work is a cast of one of the polystyrene packing shapes that hug the machine to protect it during shipping. Liu's version is glazed with copper oxide slip, which lends it a precious sheen like the patina of ancient metalwork. In the process of translating the forms of disposable packaging into fine art, Liu renders the object's original function obsolete and introduces his new version into a system of values based on aesthetics, not utility.

The 'Eidolon' series (2014) similarly uses packing shapes whose anthropomorphism calls to mind ethnographic statues. In ancient Greek, 'eidolon' signifies an idealized person or object, but it is also synonymous with a 'spectre' or 'phantom' in human form, a double meaning that Liu's ceramics espouse by inflecting the sculpture's presence with the suggestion of its absent source material. His slip-cast sculptures – made by pouring a mixture of clay and water into a mould to form a layer on its inside walls – come into being within a void haunted by the spectre of the original utilitarian object whose form they echo.

Liu's ceramics begin with the disposable by-products of contemporary technology and commerce. These seemingly throwaway plastic and foam items embody a nexus of concerns related to the global circulation of goods, as well as the value systems at work in the domains of art, taste, technology, labour and the environment. Speaking about an exhibition of his work in China in 2011, Liu noted the irony of transforming cheap goods manufactured in China into valuable works of art that were then shipped back to China to be put on view and admired.

Liu's work also pays homage to art history across the ages, and is reminiscent of ancient devotional statues as well as modernist sculpture. Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* (1918) – intended as a monument to Romanian soldiers who perished in the First World War – is a reference point for Liu in his totemic stack of repeated and rotated shapes, *Gnomon* (2013). Many of Liu's ceramics are suggestive of ancient artefacts, wrong-footing us with their muted tones that hint that they might only recently have been unearthed during an archaeological dig. Paradoxically, they seem to be relics from a future moment, objects that have a multiplicity of virtual meanings deep within them, a condition Liu alluded to when explaining how he comes to make his work: 'I need to keep looking at something until my eyes get fooled into seeing something else or morphing into something that suggests something from another genre or another time or another classification of objects.'

• Ellen Mara De Wachter



An Te Liu Born 1967, Tainan, Taiwan. Lives and works in Toronto. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Civilisation', Anat Egbi Gallery, Los Angeles; 2016 – 'An Te Liu – Naine Blanche', Musée d'art de Joliette, Canada; 2015 – 'An Te Liu – Des bribes et des morceaux', Galerie Division, Montreal; 'An Te Liu – Solid States', Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art at the Toronto Sculpture Garden; 2014 – 'An Te Liu – In Absentia', Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Canada and touring to Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Canada; and Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Canada; 'The Knowing Nothing of the Thing', Art Labor Gallery, Shanghai; 2013 – 'Mono No Ma', Gardiner Museum, Toronto; 2008 – 'Matter', Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Terminal P, La Panacée', Montpellier and La Gaité Lyrique, Paris; 2014 – 'Shine a light: 2014 Canadian Biennial', National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; 'Der Brancusi Effekt', Kunsthalle Vienna; 2012 – 'Museum for the End of the World', Nuit Blanche 2012, Toronto; 2011 – 'PARAdesign', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 2009 – 'The Leona Drive Project', Willowdale, Toronto; 2008 – 'Hier ist Amerika oder Nirgends', Galerie Ben Kaufmann / Art Berlin Contemporary, Berlin; 2007 – 'Modelle für Morgen: Köln', European Kunsthalle, Cologne, Germany.

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↖ *Xoanon*, 2013
Press moulded earthenware with sawdust additions and copper oxide slip
20.5 × 12.5 × 38 cm
(8 × 4 ⅞ × 15 in)

↑ Left: *Eidolon VII–I*
Slip cast stoneware with black slip
19.8 × 14.4 × 31.7 cm
(7 ¾ × 5 ⅝ × 12 ½ in)=

Middle: *Eidolon IV-III*
Slip cast stoneware with copper oxide slip
10 × 7 × 17 cm
(3 ⅞ × 2 ¾ x 6 ¾ in)

Right: *Eidolon I-I*, 2014
Slip cast earthenware with tarnished silver glaze
10 × 7 × 15 cm
(3 ⅞ × 2 ¾ × 5 ⅞ in)

→→ Overleaf, from left:

Obsolete Figure in Space, 2013
Slip cast earthenware with copper oxide slip

Aphros, 2013
Press moulded earthenware with sawdust additions, copper oxide slip, pigment

Order of Solids, 2013
Slip cast earthenware

Gnomon, 2013
Cast plaster with pigmented wax

Chimera, 2013
Slip cast earthenware with pigmented wax

Installation view, 'MONO NO MA' exhibition, Gardiner Museum, Toronto

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Re Liu

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At fourteen years old, Liu Jianhua became an apprentice ceramicist in his uncle's porcelain factory in Jingdezhen, a city renowned for its ancient Chinese imperial kilns. A decade later he enrolled to study sculpture at the city's art college. Jianhua was in his early forties when he exhibited his breakthrough work, *Regular/Fragile* (2000–2), an installation composed of 1,500 porcelain replicas of everyday consumer objects, at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Jianhua experimented with bluish-white ceramic fired at high temperature to produce this work, which quotes everyday objects from his Shanghai apartment such as hats, teddy bears and toy guitars. The installation was inspired by the birth of the artist's first child, in 2001, and news images of scattered personal possessions from three crashed Chinese planes. Porcelain's ambiguous material properties – it is hard but also fragile – convey what Jianhua views as the underlying frailty of human existence, underscored in the work's title.

Regular/Fragile has been exhibited in various configurations, sometimes hung from gallery walls and rafters, sometimes heaped in piles on museum floors. The installation marked an important turning point for Jianhua, whose figurative work from the 1990s reiterated the vivid pop idiom of Chinese painters like Li Ji. Emblematic here is Jianhua's *Polychrome Ceramic Series – Obsessive Memories* (1997–2001), painted ceramic depictions of headless women in body-hugging cheongsam dresses. Seductively posed on chairs and couches, the lavish non-Western seating hinted at China's nascent consumerism – a theme that would occupy Jianhua's subsequent work.

Yiwu Investigation (2006) is an installation composed of plastic objects spewing from a large container. The objects are from Yiwu, a city in southern China that produces more than sixty per cent of the world's Christmas decorations. *Discard* (2011) is marked by a similar abundance, albeit while offering a self-reflexive look at the discipline and waste of Jingdezhen's commercial potteries. The installation is composed of poorly fired porcelain pieces discarded by their makers. The work is both a meditation on the meaning of the porcelain craft, on how perfection is achieved through repetition and abandonment, and China's role as hyper-producer. The work has different iterations: *Discard 1* (2011) includes multicolour reproductions of antique Ming porcelain from Jingdezhen, while *Discard 2* (2011) comprises only white porcelain objects.

Jianhua's recent works eschew the instructional tone of these waste works, offering meditative statements characterized by their reduced formal qualities. First exhibited in Beijing, *Square* (2014) consists of irregular-sized rectangular sheets of steel displaying gold-coated porcelain globules. The abstract idiom adopted here is expressive of Jianhua's current aesthetic philosophy, developed around 2008, of 'no meaning, no context'. He elaborated further in 2015: 'While most people express certain grand themes by narrative approaches or a system of symbols, I want the opposite: to get rid of those so-called meanings and put more emphasis on the spiritual and perceptual experiences my works deliver.' The minimalist undertow of his new 'quiet aesthetics', to further quote the artist, is evident in his 'Blank Paper' works (2009–). The wall-mounted white porcelain rectangles resemble paper; they are in fact fragile ceramic sheets. • Sean O'Toole

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Liu Jianhua Born 1962, Ji'an, Jiangxi Province, China. Lives and works in Shanghai. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Transfer', Dowse Museum, Wellington, New Zealand; 2015 – 'Between', Pace, London; 'Polit-Sheer-Form in Taipei', MOCA, Taipei; 2014 – 'Square', Pace Beijing; 'Polit-Sheer-Form!', Queens Museum, New York; 2011 – 'Discard', Shanghai Pujiang Overseas Chinese Town; 'Screaming Walls', Ullens Center For Contemporary Art, Beijing; 2008 – 'Dream in Conflict', Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – Utopias/Heterotopia – 'Wuzhen International Contemporary Art Exhibition', China; 'A Community of Chinese Contemporary Artists', K11 Art Museum, Shanghai; 'Collection Displays – Between Object And Architecture', Tate Modern, London; 2015 – 'A New Dynasty-Created in China', ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark; '2015 The Sixth Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale', Niigata-ken, Japan; 2014 – 'Conversations through the Asian collections', Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

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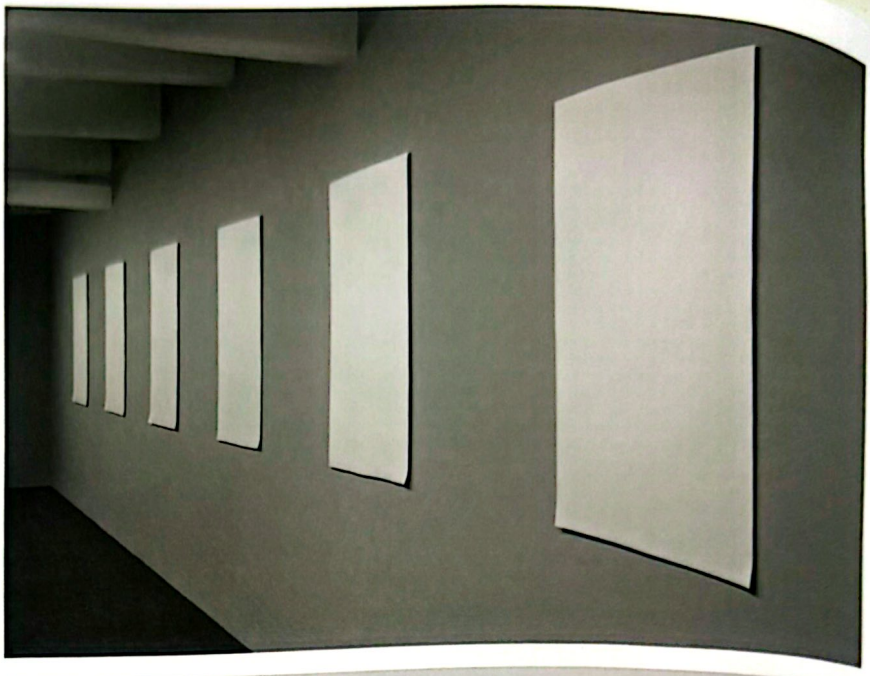



↑↑ *Blank Paper*, 2009
Porcelain
120 × 90 × 0.5 cm
(47 ¼ × 35 ½ × ¼ in)
Installation view, 'Time Traveller' exhibition, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, 2012

↑ *Container*, 2009
Porcelain
Variable dimensions
Installation view at Beijing Commune, 2009

↗ *Regular/Fragile: Along the Huangpu River*, 2001–10
Porcelain
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Floating Landscape' exhibition, Z-art Center, Shanghai, 2010

→ *Discard 2*, 2011
Broken porcelain shards from various periods
Variable dimensions
Installation view, Pujiang Overseas Chinese Town, Shanghai, 2011

→→ Overleaf:
Square, 2014
Porcelain and steel
Variable dimensions
Installation view at Pace Beijing, 2014

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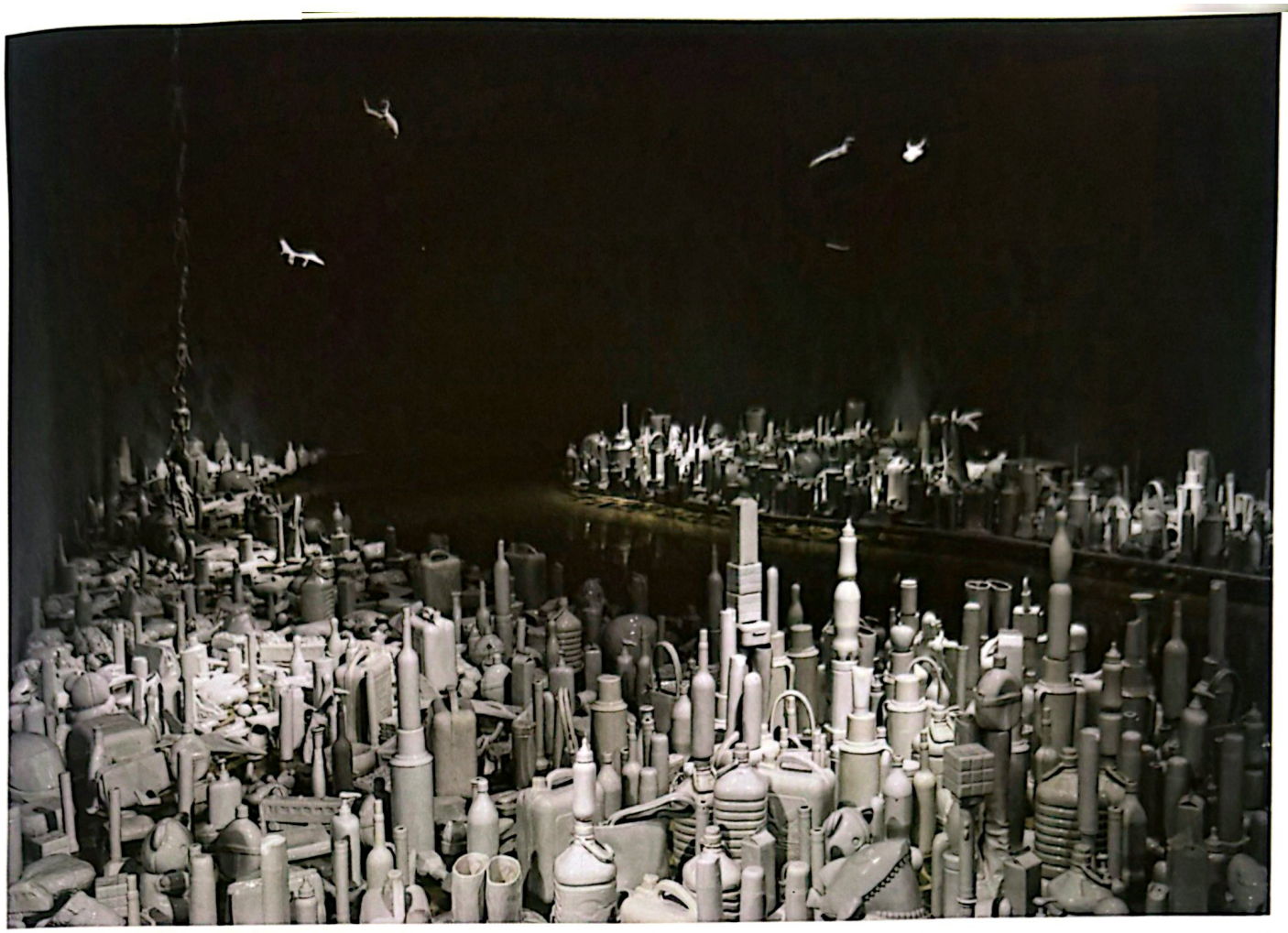



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While Andrew Lord's practice has consistently dealt with physical manifestations of negative space, a significant redirection took place in his work after the 1980s. During the 1970s, while Lord was living in the Netherlands, his focus was on light: specifically, how it created negative forms in the shadows on the ceramic vessels that he was making in his studio. His observational drawings then provided the sources for other objects – positive forms emerging from darkness, casting their own sharp shadows. The black forms of *Sixteen pieces. Angled* (1986) were the last example of this working process, a group of spiky planar objects that were created in response to the rounded vessels of *Sixteen pieces. Modelling* (1986).

In the Low Countries, cool clear light is abundant. In the early 1980s, Lord moved to a dark basement studio in New York City. At this stage, his preoccupation with the absences in and around objects took on a more bodily register, rather than being fundamentally optical. The subsequent change in his work is evident, for example, in three irregular vessels with pummelled, Rodin-esque surfaces made in 1993 with the titles *Vase. Touching and holding*, *Chinese vase. Fist* and *Jug. Pressing and squeezing*.

Lord's understanding of form transcends the binaries of positive and negative, inside and out, darkness and light. For him, these concepts are inextricable, just as the identity and function of a pot depends on the absence – the inner void – around which it is constructed. Pots, urns, jugs, cups and other vessels, therefore, collectively constitute intellectual and psychological themes for him, rather than a traditional artisanal format. He has never associated with the world of craft pottery, but rather appears to be in conversation with figures from the modernist avant-garde.

In a body of work begun in the early 2000s, Lord paid tribute to four key influences with a series of vases turned to describe, in negative, the facial profiles of famous twentieth-century artists: Picasso, Gauguin, Duchamp and Johns. Each loosely glazed vase was appended with other ceramic objects: books, a wooden plank, a stretcher, paintings by other canonical artists. In *Profile vase (Duchamp), 'Lunch Poems'/O'Hara, two weights and throat* (2002), Lord dangled from the vase's rim a ceramic shape cast from his throat, tied to a length of string. Since the form hangs in the void that describes Duchamp's profile, Lord metonymically inserted his own voice into the throat of his predecessor, an ambiguous metaphor for the way he processes influences through his profoundly bodily practice.

In the recent set of objects titled *at sunset, Carson mesa (Gauguin)* (2013), Lord acknowledged his debt to Gauguin's ceramics of the late nineteenth century. Glazed in yellow, salmon pink, turquoise and blue, Lord's pieces are expressionist homages to Gauguin's figurative – and barely functional – vases and bowls. The series points to the enduring importance of light for Lord: it was formed, in clay, as he prepared to depart from New York bound for New Mexico; and completed on the vast plains of the Carson mesa, with Lord applying the luminous glazes as the sun went down. • Jonathan Griffin

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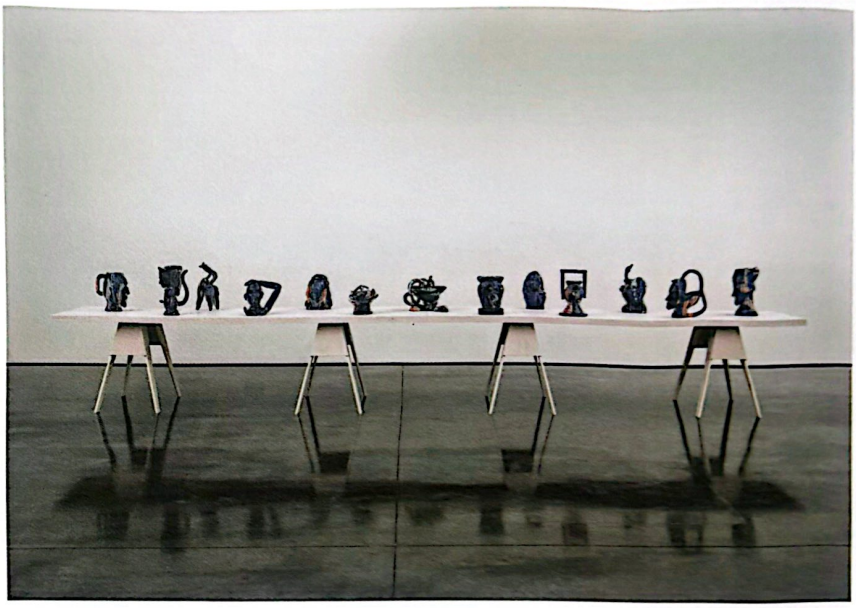
Andrew Lord Born 1950, Rochdale, UK. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Sorrow, a sculpture of thirty pieces and related work', Gladstone Gallery, Brussels; 2015 – 'at sunset, with snow falling, by starlight', Gladstone Gallery, New York; 2014 – 'On Carson Mesa', Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; 2010 – Milton Keynes Gallery, UK; 'Between my hands to water falling, selected works from 1990 to 2010,' Santa Monica Museum of Art; 2003 – 'New Sculpture', Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede, Netherlands; 1998 – 'Recent Work', Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, Colorado; 'Recent Work', Nerman Museum of Art, Overland Park, Kansas. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – '65 Works Selected by James Welling', David Zwirner, New York; 2015 – 'Artists and Poets', Wiener Secession, Vienna; 'Summer Exhibition', Royal Academy of Arts, London; 2014 – 'Liverpool Biennial', UK; 2012 – 'Depot VBVR', Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands; 2010 – 'Speak, Memory', Stroom Den Haag, Netherlands; 2009 – 'Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture', National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC; 'The Unexpected – van Picasso tot Penck, van Appel tot Koons', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 2008 – 'Depot VBVR: Cragg, Flanagan, Gilbert & George, Long, Lord, Pope', Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede, Netherlands.







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with snow falling, Carson mesa (Gauguin), 2013
Glazed ceramic sculptures
in 16 parts
Variable dimensions

by starlight, Carson mesa (Gauguin), 2013
Glazed ceramic sculptures
in 13 parts
Overall installation:
115.5 × 600 × 100 cm
(45 ½ × 236 ¼ × 39 in)

at sunset, Carson mesa (Gauguin), 2013
Glazed ceramic sculptures
in 14 parts
Variable dimensions

Installation view, 'Andrew Lord' exhibition, Milton Keynes Gallery, UK, 2010

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Alice Mackler's ceramic sculptures seemingly wobble up from wide bases, emerging as lumpy stalagmites. With the quick push of a finger into clay, Mackler gives eyes, mouths, hips and breasts to her small mountains. Colourful glazes fill in the rest – a pink and yellow base offering the suggestion of an earthenware dress, a candy-red glob suggesting hair, and two sunken teal discs standing in for eyes.

At eighty-five years old, Mackler has been drawing, painting and sculpting these vibrant, voluptuous women for over five decades, during which time she also had a full career as a manager for an advertising agency. She began as a student at New York's acclaimed Art Student League in the 1950s (where artists including Robert Smithson, Cy Twombly and Frank Stella also studied), but did not come to ceramics until some four decades later, in 1999.

Early in her early artistic career, Mackler worked exclusively in two dimensions, drawing from live models, and always focusing on the same subject: the female body. Her vibrant colourful paintings feature women with curved, full and unreal shapes, while her collages mix these same jewelled hues with fashionable images clipped from magazines. A lifelong New Yorker, Mackler's artworks fittingly vibrate with life, colour and femininity, drawing from the world around her and from the artist's own inner life. Described in numerous reviews as bawdy, sexy and even subversively ambiguous, Mackler's wide-eyed and open-mouthed ceramic forms convey levity, sensuality and immediacy. The artist has stated that she never edits her output – it is what it is, and that's what it should remain.

Expressive, dimpled, off-kilter and more than a bit phallic are further adjectives that could be used to summarize her output. For example, in one work from 2016, a woman reminiscent of an opera singer stands with her hands joined, mouth open and warbling, her bright-orange hair standing erect and rising into the sky.

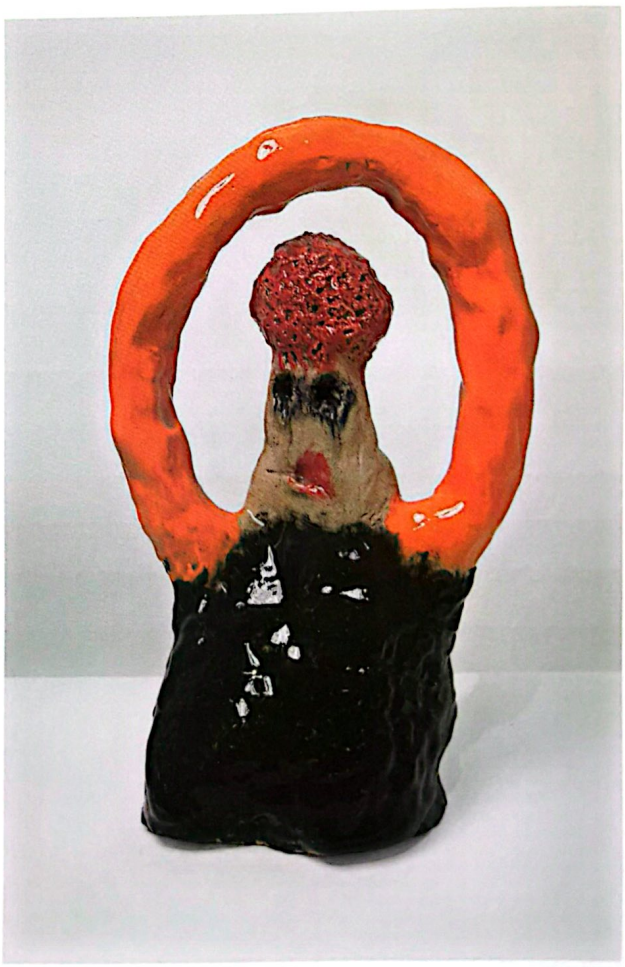
Though it may be difficult to draw direct comparisons between her works and those of other artists, Mackler is keen to credit her influences. In her paintings from the 1960s, we might find a hint of Picasso in the elongated, twisted necks and inflated, distorted skulls. Both her paintings and sculptures echo something of Paul Klee's elastic sense of the human body, a reference she is quick to claim. And consciously or not, the garish colours and almost clownish figures of Mackler's women recall something of the 'Nanas' scuptures of French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002). Despite these parallels, Mackler's work and her worldview are entirely unique, and spring from an uncompromising mind.

• Jens Hoffmann

Alice Mackler Born 1931, New York. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Alice Mackler', Kerry Schuss, New York; 2015 – 'Alice Mackler', Kerry Schuss, New York; 2014 – 'Alice Mackler: Sculpture and Paintings', Kerry Schuss at Independent; 2013 – 'Alice Mackler: Sculpture, Painting, Drawing', Kerry Schuss, New York; Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Mal Maison', Maccarone, New York; 'Gardens of the Pure: Works by Kitty Brophy, Emma Kohlmann, Alice Mackler', MOCA Tucson, Arizona; 'The Faraway Inside', Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York; 'All Right', Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles; 'Drawings', Kerry Schuss; 'Looking Back/The 10th White Columns Annual', White Columns, New York; 2015 – 'The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra and its Legacy', Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; 'Unorthodox', The Jewish Museum, New York; Mirror Effect', The Box, Los Angeles; 'Amer, Baga, Cameron, Greenbaum, Lins, Mackler', Jane Hartsook Gallery, New York; 2014 – 'Part 2: Kerstin Bratsch, Esther Klas, Alice Mackler', Warhus Rittershaus, Cologne, Germany; 'Daughter of Bad Girls', Klaus Von Nichtssagend Gallery, New York; 'Half Drop', Kerry Schuss, New York; 2013 – 'Forget About the Sweetbreads', James Fuentes Gallery, New York.

Alice Mackler





← *Untitled*, 2014
Glaze, clay
22.4 × 10.7 × 7.6 cm
(8¾ × 4¼ × 3 in)

↙ *Untitled*, 2016
Glaze, clay
22.9 × 12.7 × 10.2 cm
(9 × 5 × 4 in)

→ *Untitled*, 2014
Glaze, clay
Left: 19.1 × 11.4 × 12.7 cm
(7½ × 4½ × 5 in)
Right: 21.6 × 8.9 × 10.2 cm
(8½ × 3½ × 4 in)

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Mackler

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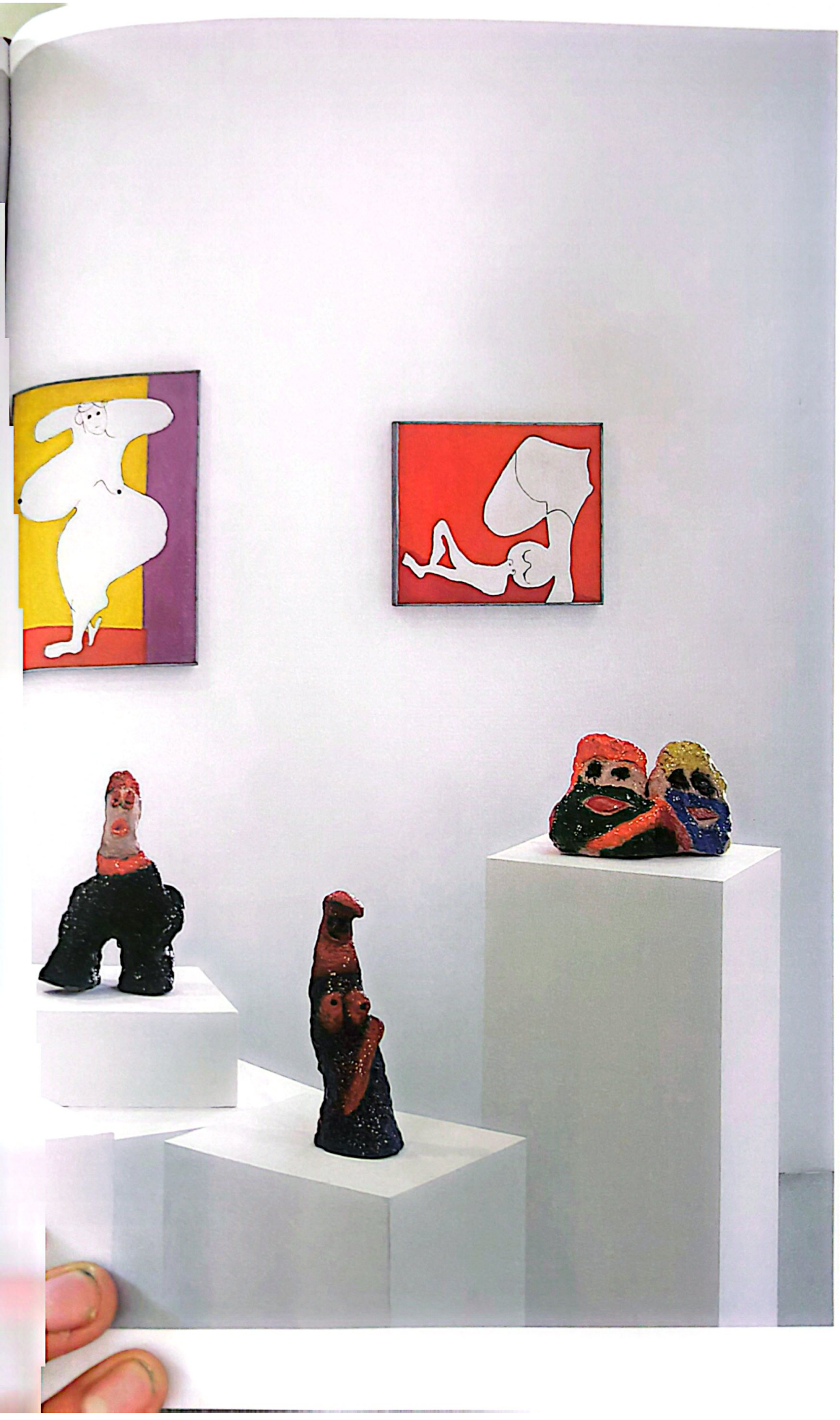

← Installation view, 'Alice Mackler: Sculpture and Paintings', Kerry Schuss at Independent Art Fair, New York, 2014

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'It provoked a storm inside me,' says Anna Maria Maiolino about her first encounter with clay, late in her career, towards the end of the 1980s. Having been active for over two decades in a range of media, including drawing, video and performance, when she began to use clay it simultaneously transformed her work and affirmed the consistency of her practice. For Maiolino clay represents continuity, both literally and symbolically.

The coherence of her practice is rooted in her approach to material. Her inclination to explore matter, the physical substance of her work, can be traced back to drawings, in which she drips ink onto the surface of paper and creates marks by moving the sheet in different directions. In other works she cuts through the sheets of paper, stiches them together, pierces or superimposes the layers to achieve sculptural effect. She talks about such pieces as made with paper rather than on it. A subtle change of prepositions serves as a useful clue for reading these works. The material becomes the subject as well as a record of the movements of the artist's body in the act of making; a guiding principle also for Maiolino's work with clay.

In her large-scale, immersive installations, which she began making in the early 1990s, innumerable pieces of unfired clay take over the interiors of museums and galleries. For example, in her 'Terra Modelada' series (2010), clay is laid out in regimented fashion on floors, tables and shelves, or piled up against the walls. Repeated rudimentary forms – little balls, coils, flat slabs and lumps of various dimensions – are all made by hand through the simplest of movements, kneading and rolling, gestures which go back to the very beginnings of material production. The way Maiolino works this primordial mass of material makes us think about the origins of art, but also about labour and the physical effort it involves. Each part is individually shaped with equal attention. Yet, the unfired clay easily lends itself to changes; it can be remodelled or recycled. As much as Maiolino's works are about making and doing, they are also about unmaking and undoing. Carefully moulded forms can be brought back to a shapeless mass with just a simple gesture. From mud to mud, dust to dust, they embody the cycle of life.

Looking closely at these clay shapes reveals the barely visible traces of the artist's body, the imprints of her hands and fingers on their surfaces reflecting the actions – all the touching, squeezing and rolling – involved in her working process. Touch (repetitive, loving, at times brutal) and physical contact are key to an understanding of her project. From violently torn sheets of paper to lips pressing against the screen in her films to fingerprints left on tiny slabs of clay, the artist's body is both present and absent in her works. For her, 'The thinking, feeling, desiring body is what makes the work. Without the body we are in a field of lacking.' • Kasia Redzisz

Anna Maria Maiolino Born 1942, Scalea, Calabria, Italy. Lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Anna Maria Maiolino', MOCA The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; 2012 – 'Affections', MASP Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo; 2010 – 'Anna Maria Maiolino', Fundação Antoní Tàpies, Barcelona, and touring to Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; and Malmö Kunsthalle, Sweden; 'Continuum', Camden Arts Centre, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947–2016', Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, Los Angeles; 2015 – 'La Grande Madre', Palazzo Reale, Milan; 'XX Triennale di Milano', Milan; 'The EY Exhibition: The World Goes Pop', Tate Modern, London; 2012 – 'Here & There', dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany; 2011 – 'The Fourth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art', Moscow; 2010 – 'On Line: Drawing Through the Twentith Century', The Museum of Modern Art, New York; 'Há sempre um copo de mar para um homem velejar', '29a Bienal de São Paulo', Brazil; 'Mind and Matter: Alternative Abstractions, 1940s to Now', The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



A[illegible]a Maiolino

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Left to right:
Mais que Um, São 25, São 21,
All from 'Preposições' series, 2013
Raku ceramic pieces and
metal wire in metal table
with electrostatic painting
Raku pieces: variable dimensions
Metal tables each:
125 × 35 × 35 cm
(49 ¼ × 13 ¾ × 13 ¾ in)

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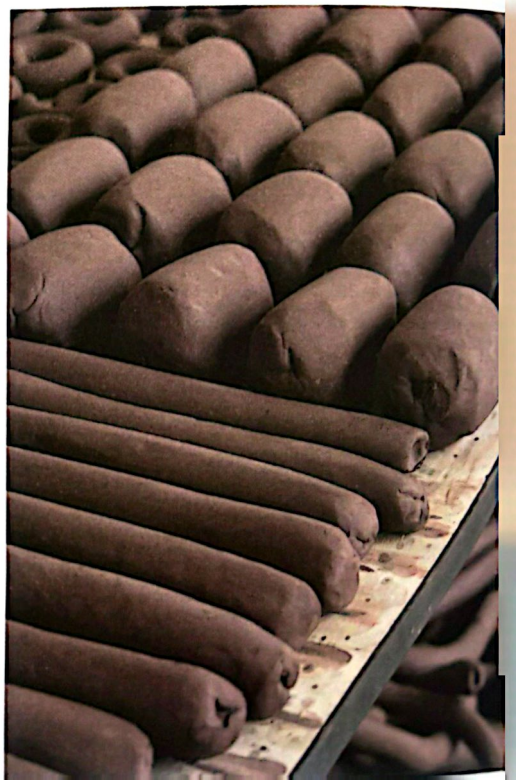

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↓↑ From 'Terra Modelada' series, 2010
6 tons of clay, modelled in situ
Installation views, Fundació
Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona

Continuous [details] from
'Terra Modelada' series, 2010
4 tons of clay, modelled in situ
Installation views
Camden Arts Centre, London

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Time eddies in peculiar patterns in the work of Mark Manders. Turning eighteen in 1986, the year has strong resonance with his work. 'I have the feeling that all of the objects I make are from then,' he has explained, something which has frequently required sourcing or recreating obsolete materials from the period. Having originally studied graphic design, it was in 1986 that Manders decided that he wanted to be a writer, but one whose narratives would be fabricated from objects rather than language.

He began *Self Portrait as a Building* that year – an architectural floor plan composed on the floor using colourful writing implements found on his desk. Manders has spent three decades elaborating his imaginary spaces, creating a series of installations, sculptures and drawings that have an immediate impact – translating human experience into forms that can be read with a simultaneity denied by conventional sentence structures.

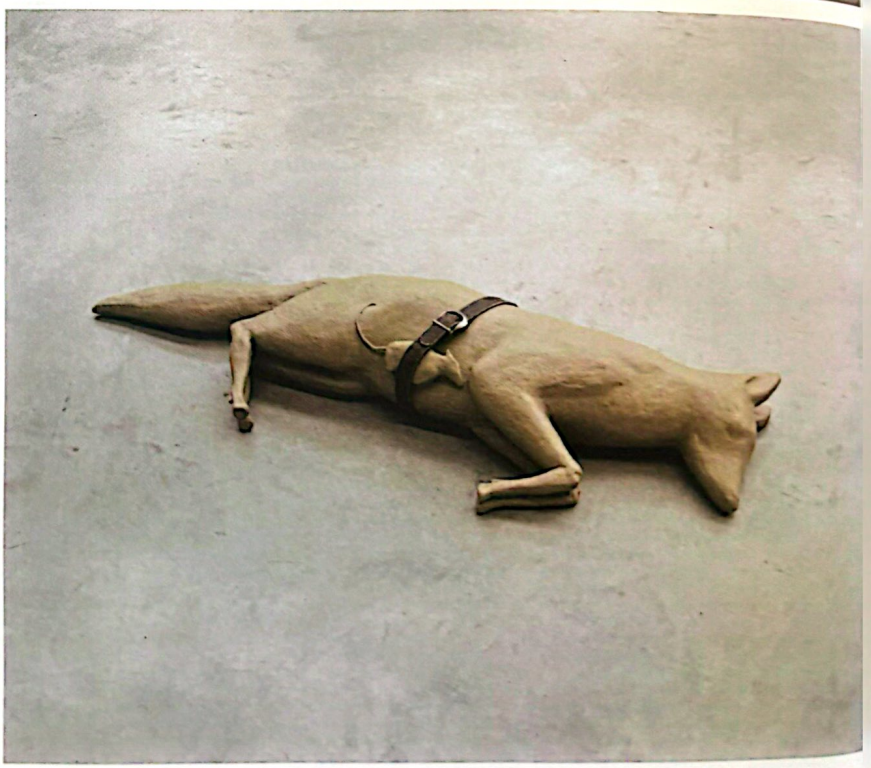
Manders places this recent past in tension with the Classical period, using the scale of the colossi or the features of Grecian goddesses to lend his work an otherworldly quality. *Room with Unfired Clay Figures* (2011–15) presents a pair of prone forms with prepubescent faces and unshaped trunks, each sliced in half like archaeological finds in the midst of examination, while *Unfired Clay Head* (2011–14), features a sliver of face, compressed on both sides by panels of wood like petals in a flower press.

The titles are misleading here: the reiteration of 'unfired clay' acting as a decoy for Manders' typical process, which involves molding wet clay before casting it in bronze, which is then painted to resemble the original clay mould. The effect is a seeming fragility belied by material strength; an impression of imminent decay.

In his studio, Manders often works across several pieces simultaneously which, when coupled with the consistency of his visual vocabulary over the years, makes his work difficult to date just by looking at it. When invited to participate in international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale in 2013 or Carnegie International in 2008, he has often responded by bringing together older works with newly made ones, seamlessly presenting the two together as if both belong to the same suspended moment in time.

There is strange humour in these paradoxical forms, echoed in Manders' decision that he would test all of his finished work in a supermarket setting to ensure that it could exist outside an art gallery context. 'I just imagine my new work there and check if it can survive ... now I am sure that all of my works can stand in that environment.' • Eleanor Nairne





Mark Manders Born 1968 in Volkel, Netherlands. Lives and works in Ronse, Belgium. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Mark Manders', Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium; 2014 – 'Cose in Corso', Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; 'Acolyte Frena', De Vleeshal, Middelburg, Netherlands; 'Mark Manders', Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; 2013 – 'Room with Broken Sentence', Dutch Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; 2011 – 'Parallel Occurrences / Documented Assignments', Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and touring to Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; and Dallas Museum of Art. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'The Absent Museum', WIELS, Brussels; 2016 – 'Incorporated!', Rennes Biennial, Rennes, France; 'Rainbow Caravan', Aichi Triennial, Japan; 'The Promise of Total Automation', Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; 2015 – 'A Brief History of the Future', Louvre, Paris; 'Storylines', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; 'The Bottom Line', S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium; 2014 – 'Inside', Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

Mark Manders

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Unfired Clay Head, 2011–14
Painted bronze, iron
194.3 × 91.4 × 78.7 cm
(76½ × 36 × 31 in)

Fox / Mouse / Belt, 1993
Painted bronze, belt
115 × 120 × 40 cm
(6 × 47¼ × 15¾ in)

Dry Clay Head, 2015–16
Bronze, rope, plywood,
offsetprint on paper
c.233 × 155 × 283 cm
c.91¾ × 61 × 111½ in)

Room with Unfired
Clay Figures, 2011–15
Painted bronze, iron, wood,
offset print on paper
Small figure:
139.5 × 293.7 × 104.1 cm
(74¼ × 115¼ × 41 in)
Large figure:
137.2 × 359.4 × 129.5 cm
(73¼ × 141½ × 51 in)
Installation view, Museum
of Fine Arts of Rennes, France

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You won't find a work by Helen Marten whose material is listed solely as 'ceramics', though it is frequently an element of her sculptures. A typical checklist is the one for *Long Division Lunches (Let by)*, from 2014, whose components also include welded powder-coated steel, engraved Corian, photo-etched copper, laser-cut steel, pencil, strings, waxed fabric, rose petals, staples, stone, the end of a match and flies. The ceramic aspect is two freestanding glyphs in splashy metallic glazes, their sinuous and notched shapes midway between standing stone and car door, from which a string extends to a further assemblage – a miniature metallic architecture – on the floor. In *Blind World* (2014), a limb-like pair of stacked, empurpled ceramics, hollow and inserted with paraphernalia like a little shrine, sits next to a tiny, open-topped model room complete with miniature chairs, crowned with a relatively giant yellow basket. The implied scale of Marten's incorporated elements travels up and down; they veer between familiarity and obscurity; textures clatter and meld. To the extent that we can generalize about Marten's work – which one of her gallerists has compared to reading a surreal pulp novel and other commentators have been quick to hitch to the sensory overload of contemporary life – this scintillating discontinuity is what she does.

Her ability to snag and poeticize the grain of our moment has been key to Marten's fast rise, from her 2010 solo debut in Naples two years after graduating from the Ruskin School of Art, to her Turner Prize win in 2016, with stops at the Venice Biennale, numerous kunsthalles and other prize ceremonies along the way. Formative experiences included discovering Robert Rauschenberg's Combines and reading Roberto Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), visiting the glittering but discontinuous sites described. Both influences are visible in her art. One of Marten's 2016 installations in London's Serpentine Galleries, *The Cat from the Bacon*, mixes retro-futuristic pyramidal architecture, pastel-coloured workmen's hats, stacks of glazed ceramic hoops and a grey ceramic multi-breasted headless figure, as well as tiny, generous details too numerous to enumerate. It's a controlled forest of signs, colour-coded with a painter's eye, but it doesn't feel remotely retro. Our constant toggling between onscreen images and real life is compressed here into objects, often with double-dealing surfaces, that feel like things and representations simultaneously.

Behind these surfaces is a framework of research, and Marten's Serpentine show was inspired, she's said, by 'medieval pharmacology'. Her structured melees offer a parallel sense of multiple coexisting timescales, and in this sense ceramic works might serve as a touchstone of the handmade artistic past, except that Marten's ceramics can appear among the most outsourced of her components, while her hand is more evident in the obsessive arrangement of materials and textures. Earthenware, the oldest of sculptural forms, here becomes one more element unmoored from its former sense and pulled, via outlandish but exact logic, towards a new one. • Martin Herbert

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Helen Marten Born 1985, Macclesfield, UK. Lives and works in London. Recent Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Drunk Brown House', Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London; 'Eucalyptus, let us in', Greene Naftali, New York; 2014 – 'Parrot Problems', Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany; 'Orchids, or a hemispherical bottom', Johann König, Berlin; 'Oreo St. James', Sadie Coles HQ, London; 2013 – 'No borders in a wok that can't be crossed', CCS Bard Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; 2012 – 'Plank Salad', Chisenhale Gallery, London; 'Evian Disease', Palais de Tokyo, Paris; 'Almost the exact shape of Florida' Kunsthalle Zürich; 2011 – 'Take a stick and make it sharp', Johann König, Berlin; 2010 – 'Wicked patterns', T293, Naples. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'New Sculpture', The Whitworth, Manchester, UK; 'Turner Prize', Tate Britain, London; 'The Hepworth Prize for Sculpture', Hepworth Wakefield, UK; 'Suspended Animation', Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; 'The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed: 20th Biennale of Sydney'; 2015 – 'All the World's Futures', 56th Venice Biennale; 2013 – 'The Encyclopedic Palace', 55th Venice Biennale; '12th Lyon Biennale', France.

Helen Marten





↖ *Blind World*, 2014
Glazed ceramic, welded powder coated steel, architectural court room model, steel clippings, stitched fabric, quail's eggs, cardboard, copper, twigs, rubber, coal, hand blown glass prosthetic eyeballs, electric cable, artist poem on vinyl plastic
Ceramic: 125 × 65 × 60 cm
(49¼ × 25½ × 23½ in)
Basket: 63 × 67 × 60 cm
(7 × 12⅛ × 11¾ in)

← *Long division lunches (Let by)*, 2014
Glazed ceramic, welded powder coated steel, engraved Corian, photo etched copper, flies, laser cut steel, pencil, strings, waxed fabric, rose petals, match end, staples, stone
Ceramic: 138 × 85 × 55 cm
(54⅜ × 33½ × 21⅝ in)
Metal appendage: 30 × 78 × 60 cm
(11¾ × 30¾ × 23⅝ in)

↗ Installation view, 'Helen Marten, Drunk Brown House' exhibition, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, 2016

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Dan McCarthy likes surprises. When, in a recent interview, he told me that 'opening a kiln after a glaze firing is like being a thirteen year old on Christmas', I imagined him there in his studio, kneeling down with latent heat from the kiln warming his face and returning the wide-toothed grin of his smiling, cartoon-like objects. His playful works take the form of smiley-faced individual portraits – a series that he fittingly calls 'Facepots'.

Pier Rat (2015), for example, is a large head-shaped vessel of fleshy pink with wide eyes, a blob for a nose and a curved line for a mouth. These features shine as their reflective gold lustre (a type of iridescent glaze produced by metallic oxides in an overglaze finish) catches the light, as do the polka-dot freckles scattered around the head itself. In *X Ray Spex* (2015) the smile is a sausage of clay, rolled between the palms and then gently affixed to a lemon yellow face. With a colour palette that sees glasses drawn on in a single line of lapis lazuli blue and lips taking the shade of cherry red, the combination of primary colours recalls Superman's costume, not to mention his special X-ray powers as indicated by the work's title.

Born in Honolulu and growing up in Southern California, McCarthy specialized in both painting and ceramics at the San Francisco Art Institute. Upon moving to New York in 1989, his painting practice took over, and it wasn't until almost twenty-five years later, in 2013, that he reconnected with ceramic: 'I went right back to it like a fish to water.'

McCarthy's ceramics are intentionally low-tech, simple and direct. His tools are minimal – ice lolly sticks, forks, spoons – with a process that favours touch; and what drives him is the emotionally intuitive handling of wet, heavy clay that is constantly in a state of drying out, instinctively working this material into shapes with a 'sense of immediacy and buoyant spirit'. His approach employs multiple glaze firings that bring to life gold and silver leaf, gold and silver lustre, and rainbow-coloured oil and water-based paint. The results are often vivid and scintillating. Multicoloured streams of red, orange and yellow slowly weep into hues of green, blue and purple in *Italian Ice* (2015); while in *Inca White* (2016) fire-engine red is revealed beneath a white, matt crackle glaze, with a hint of sky-blue peeping out from its interior space.

His pots are characters that engage us with light-hearted humour and yet, with the artist seeing these as 'an apt metaphor for ourselves and the information and consumer era that we dwell within', it's hard not to wonder if these cheery vessels have a darker undertone, one that points towards modes of vacuous consumerism that keep us smiling and jolly but, ultimately, hollow and empty. As brightly coloured, unstable glazes crackle and run, these objects could be seen as symbols of a dysfunctional veneer of happiness that doesn't penetrate quite as deeply as we'd hope. • Louisa Elderton

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Dan McCarthy Born 1962, Honolulu, Hawaii. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – Venus Over Los Angeles, Los Angeles; 2014 – Anton Kern Gallery, New York; 2013 – Shoot the Lobster, New York; 2012 – Galerie Suzanne Tarasième, Paris; 2011 – The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; 2009 – Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; 2007 – Galerie Suzanne Tarasième, Paris; Anton Kern Gallery, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Great Figure Two', The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; 'Made in Oven - in collaboration with Thierry Boutémy', Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels; 2015 – 'Don't Worry', Kate MacGarry, London; 'SUMMERTIME', Galerie Suzanne Tarasième; '"Give A Man A Mask And He Will Tell You The Truth" Oscar Wilde', Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels; 'Fetching Blemish', Invisible Exports, New York; 2014 – 'The Smile Museum', Salon 94 at Frieze, London; 'FIRE!', Venus over Manhattan, New York; 'Positivilly Marvillainous', Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton, New York; 'If A Spider Falls From A Window, Does It Break?', Brennan & Griffin, New York; 'Life', The Journal Gallery at Venus Over Manhattan, New York.

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↑ *Lemon Gingham*, 2016
Low fire clay and glazes
68.6 × 50.8 cm
(27 × 20 in)

↗ *Italian Ice*, 2015
Low fire clay and glazes
with Lascaux paint
61 × 50.5 × 50.5 cm
(24 × 19 ⅞ × 19 ⅞ in)

→ *Pier Rat*, 2015
Low fire clay and glazes
with gold luste
61 × 45.7 × 45.7 cm
(24 × 18 × 18 in)

↗↗ *X Ray Spex*, 2015
Low fire clay and glazes, enamel
paint with gold and silver leaf
64.1 × 21.6 × 21.6 cm
(25 ¼ × 8 ½ × 8 ½ in)

→→ *Inca White*, 2016
Low fire clay and glazes
with gold and silver lustre
50.8 × 39.4 cm
(20 × 15 ½ in)

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'My projects go hand-in-hand with migration and displacement, observing how displacement creates hybrids,' said Jimena Mendoza in an interview with artist Abraham Cruzvillegas, with whom she collaborated for their 2013 exhibition in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Square. Mendoza and Cruzvillegas played a game of placing Jimena's objects as mock figurines on a board comprising Cruzvillegas's collages. Tlatelolco Square is one of Mexico's most historically complex places: a market place where goods were exchanged in the pre-Colombian era and where a massacre of students took place during protests in 1968. The performance itself, as well as its location and the objects it activated, thus connected precolonial, colonial and modern history.

As Mendoza herself puts it, she is a *mestiza* (a woman of mixed race), without a solid cultural background. Her work consists of freeing objects from their original concepts and contexts. It's a process that enables objects such as *Geometría 2* (2015), a black monotone work that is almost architectural with stairs leading up to a circular platform, to release their cultural weight and become something else – ethnic origin, culture and identity become unstable, forming new parallels, correlations and a sense of shared humanity. Yet Jimena is also interested in the transformation of tool to object, of functional item to artefact, by which things gain ritual or representative meaning. Such transformations occur when objects circulate from one culture to another.

Mendoza's interventions are by no means arbitrary or accidental, and yet neither does she work with a methodical, science-like system. She employs a meditative, handmade approach to making objects, placing emphasis on ancient crafts such as ceramics. A clay work like *Geometría 1* (2015), with its angular, multi-faceted sides painted with stripes of rust orange and forest green, draws attention to the miracle of creating an object out of something as ordinary as the earth we stand on.

For Mendoza, craft is an important manifestation of the value she attaches to community practice. Tools and production processes are important to her, as are distribution and consumption. In her eyes, the difference between industrial and craft objects lies not in the manner of their production, but in whether they remain in the community where they were produced. This belief is physically underlined by the scale of her objects, which fit into one's hand and are thus associated with the acts of handing over, holding and manipulating, rather than with exhibition or display.

Since 2013 Mendoza has lived and worked in Prague. Her interest in local fictions – rather than in science per se – led her to examine the cosmogony of the Soviet space race in the 1960s, which was part of the utopian project of modernism. In works such as *Policromía 4* and *Policromía 5* (both 2015), her distinctive cultural iconographies are combined with a cosmic vision associated with late Modernism and Brutalism, as figures stand with arms raised in salute to ideology. • Michal Novotný

Jimena Mendoza Born 1979, Mexico City. Lives and works in Prague. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Shape of relation', Berlinskej Model, Prague; 'Between world and fiction', Klubovna, Brno, Czech Republic; 2014 – 'Tamiz, leve variación de la banda', Biquini Wax, Mexico City; 2013 – 'Hallazgo (In a broken dream)', Museo de Arte de Sinaloa, Mexico; 2011 – 'Vanishing point', The Commerce Gallery, Mexico City; 2009 – 'Chemin Vert', Foundation Brownstone, Paris; 2004 – 'Community', The Esmeralda Gallery, Mexico City. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2013 – 'Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art', The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; 'Traces', La Raza Gallery, San Francisco; 'Comedores de Loto', Casa del Lago, Mexico City; 'Loto Dining', Lake House, UNAM, Mexico City; 2011 – 'Liminal Takes II', Mission Cultural center for Latino Arts, San Francisco; 'liminal takes', Center Root Division, San Francisco; 2007 – 'The Neon Ark', Character design, MUCA Rome, UNAM, Mexico City; 2006 – 'Coronitas', The Other Gallery, Banff Center, Alberta, Canada; 'Someone watches over us', Gallery Garash, Mexico City.





Jimen oza

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Matthias Merkel Hess's particular genius with ceramic is exemplified in a squat, twenty-three centimetre (nine-inch) tall piece from 2013. It appears to be some sort of vessel, perhaps a large ceremonial cup, with rounded lip and foot-like embellishments at its base. Its shiny glaze is blue, with passages of red here and there, as though it's blushing. It is only when you read its title, *Fischer Price Toddler Potty (Blue/Redish)*, that you realize why its shape is familiar. Fashioned from glazed stoneware, an ordinary plastic child's training toilet has been transformed into a precious object. Merkel Hess's is a piquant breed of Surrealism, where high and low meet, and the punning is priceless: a potty has, with the addition of two letters and some time in the studio, become a piece of pottery. When it grows up, it will be a porcelain throne.

Merkel Hess has become known for creating ceramic versions of everyday objects. He uses the same material once used to fashion an exquisite Qing dynasty vase to create a petrol can, a milk crate, an anvil, an Igloo Mini Playmate Cooler, or a hip-hugger laundry hamper. Works such as *Double Gas and Oil Can*, *5 Gallon Bucket* and *Eagle 2 Gallon Gas Can* (all 2015) depict familiar, banal objects. His first New York solo show entitled 'Hereafter', at Salon 94 gallery in 2013, riffed on ancient funerary rituals where objects would be entombed with a body. Arrayed on shelves were brilliantly coloured, sumptuously glazed versions of Coke bottles, blenders and Dustbusters and Mr. Potato Head dolls in every imaginable configuration. He sourced these items on ebay, looking for models from the 1970s and 1980s, the years of his childhood. It wasn't so much that he had a sentimental attachment to the objects, but rather that he was interested in their industrial design.

Perhaps the descendants of the *Brutes* of his art school days (sculptures of forty-gallon rubbish bins) are the pieces in a recent series that takes inspiration from a different kind of brute: the Marvel superhero The Thing, a hulk-like enhanced human whose skin looks like fissured stoneware and who, as the comic book story goes, falls in love with a blind sculptress. Merkel Hess made Sumi ink close-up drawings of The Thing's face, as well as, of course, ceramics, blob-like objects such as *Thing No. 1* (2014).

Claes Oldenburg's Pop art recreations of everyday objects have come up as a precursor for Merkel Hess, but the comparison doesn't quite seem apt. Oldenburg favoured papier mâché, plaster models and soft fabric. A more solid – in every sense – forebear might be Jasper Johns's bronze beer cans. Both artists elevate a banal object to fine art status. In Merkel Hess's hands, a plastic rotisserie chicken takeaway container that is easily crushed with a single footstep becomes an enduring object. As Merkel Hess told an interviewer at the time of his 'Hereafter' show, 'We don't have this tradition of burying people with stuff anymore, but in a weird way each artist is making their own version of that. These are things that, if taken care of and not smashed to pieces, will outlast me.' • Sarah Douglas

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Matthias Merkel Hess Born 1978, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Torsos and Buckets', Salon 94, New York; 'UR MERKEL', ACME, Los Angeles; 2014 – 'Things', Volume Gallery, Chicago; 'MerkelWare Party', Marine Projects, Los Angeles; 'Water and Gasoline', Burnet Gallery in Le Méridien Chambers, Minneapolis; 2013 – 'Oeuvreday', James Harris Gallery, Seattle; 'Hereafter', Salon 94; 'Anvils', ACME; 'Anvils', ACME. Los Angeles; 2011 – 'Bucketry', ACME; Two Projects and a Drawing', Mary Moody Gallery, West Texas A&M University, Amarillo, Texas; 'Spottieottiedopaliscious Dishes', IKO IKO, Los Angeles; 2010 – 'Devils Tower–LA', Las Cienegas Projects, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2014 – 'Corporeal Impulse', Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles; 'Cassius Clay', Marcelle Joseph Projects, London; 'Transmogrification of the Ordinary', Angles Gallery, Los Angeles; 2013 – 'Faux Real', Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California; 2012 – 'Venice Beach Biennial', Los Angeles; 'SUM', Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas; 'Material: A Group Show', Salon 94, New York; 2011 – 'Paul Clay', Salon 94, New York; 'Los Angeles Museum of Ceramic Art', ACME, Los Angeles.





Matthias Merkel Hess

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Double Gas and Oil Can, 2015
Glazed porcelain
[illegible] x 40.6 cm
([illegible] x 16 in.)

[illegible] 2013
Glazed stoneware,
porcelain and earthenware
[illegible] x 81.3 cm
([illegible] x 32 in)

Ring No. 1, 2014
Glazed stoneware
[illegible] x 45.7 x 61 cm
([illegible] x 18 x 24 in)

[illegible] Potato Head,
[illegible] and back] 2013
Glazed porcelain
[illegible] x 10.2 x 15.2 cm
([illegible] x 4 x 6 in)







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→ Glazed stoneware, porcelain and earthenware installation view, 'Hereafter' exhibition, Salon 94 Freemans, New York, 2013



...ias Merkel Hess

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It is no surprise that an elemental substance like clay should hold an important place in the deeply personal work of Marisa Merz. The artist's affinity with humble materials stems from her involvement in Arte Povera, the radical Italian art movement of the 1960s. Translated literally as 'poor art', Arte Povera was noted for its anti-capitalist stance and artworks that evoked a pre-industrial age through the use of earth, stones, rope, paper, clay, fabric and other elements not traditionally associated with art. Merz, the only female member of the group, has remained committed to its ethos for half a century. Yet, despite experiencing early success in her native Italy, she has until recently spent the majority of her career on the periphery of the art world, eclipsed by her artist husband Mario Merz (1925–2003) – the result of a canonical art history that has traditionally favoured men and marginalized women.

Merz began making her enigmatic ceramic heads in the 1980s and they are now a prominent feature of her work, being regularly shown alongside or incorporated into her sculptural installations. Desiring to draw attention to the physical properties of clay, she employs a purposefully unrefined technique that gives her heads an inchoate appearance. Many seem underdeveloped or malformed, but Merz manages to imbue each one with a personality of its own by the addition of simple eyes, noses and mouths. Their primitive appearance at once evokes prehistoric cultures and early twentieth-century modernism, while the occasional patch of blue paint and thin gold leaf embellishing their unglazed surfaces bring Byzantine icons to mind. Yet these genderless figures have a universal quality, remaining free from any distinguishing features that might identify them as belonging to a specific time or place. This is underscored by the artist's decision to leave the majority of them untitled and undated.

Occasionally Merz integrates her ceramics within larger sculptural works, where they are juxtaposed against wire, metal, wax and fabric elements. In one large floor piece, nine heads appear to float on a shimmering sea of white wax. More commonly, however, they appear alone on pedestals or on tall metal tripods that stand in as bodies. Often these spindly figures are placed close to her paintings, drawings and other works as an invitation to viewers to make formal connections between her different modes of working. Indeed, similar-looking heads appear in Merz's recent canvases, though their large scale and colourful palettes create a stark contrast with the small, quiet clay sculptures. Yet, whether presented alone or as part of larger configurations, each of Merz's diminutive heads maintains a confident presence that, like the artist herself, refuses to be overshadowed. • David Trigg

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Marisa Merz Born 1926 Turin, Italy. Lives and works in Turin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Marisa Merz', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; 2016 – Marisa and Mario Merz', Museum of Contemporary Art Rome; 2013 – 'Marisa Merz', Sepentine Gallery, London; 2012 – 'Marisa Merz: disegnare disegnare ridisegnare il pensiero immagine che cammina', Fondazione Merz, Turin; 2010 – 'Marisa Merz', Centre internationale d'art et du paysage, Ile de Vassivière, France; 2007 – 'Marisa Merz', Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples, Italy; 2003 – 'Marisa Merz', Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; 1998 – 'Marisa Merz', Villa delle Rose, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Italy; 1996 – 'Marisa Merz', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1995 – 'Marisa Merz', Kunstmuseum Winterthur; 1994 – 'Marisa Merz', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Plages', Campoli Presti, London; 2016 – 'Identity Revisted', The Warehouse, Dallas, TX; 'Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947–2016', Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, Los Angeles; 2015 – 'TUTTTOVERO', Fondazione Merz and Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; 'Ennesima. An Exhibition of Seven Exhibitions on Italian Art (Ennesima: Una mostra di sette mostre sull'arte italiana),' Triennale di Milano, Milan; 2014 – 'Group Exhibition', Bernier-Eliades Gallery, Athens, Greece; 'Looking Back: The Eighth White Columns Annual', White Columns, New York; 2013 – 'Mind is Outer Space', Casey Kaplan, New York; 'The Encyclopedic Palace', 55th Venice Biennale.



↑ *Untitled*, 2006
Stoneware
22.9 × 11.4 × 18.4 cm
(9 × 4½ × 7¼ in)

↗ *Untitled*, 2010
Unfired clay and copper
13 × 7 × 11 cm
(5⅛ × 2¾ × 4⅜ in)

↗↗ *Untitled*, 2009
Terracotta, paint and gold leaves
15.2 × 14.5 × 14.5 cm
(6 × 5¾ × 5¾ in)

→ *Untitled*, undated
Painted clay
15.6 × 7.6 × 9.2 cm
(6⅛ × 3 × 3⅝ in)

→→ *Untitled*, 2008
Terracotta, paint and gold leaves
16.5 × 10 × 11.5 cm
(6½ × 4 × 4½ in)

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Video documentation filmed by Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, shows the process of making Delcy Morelos installation *No es un río, es una madre* ('It's not a River, It's a Mother', 2014). A room is lined with black plastic sheeting upon which lie long strips of fique cloth that soak up the liquid clay that is brushed into them. Fique is a natural fibre extracted from the leaves of a succulent plant that grows in the region of the Andes where Colombia, Ecuador and Peru join borders. Adapted to survive without water, the fique fibres are, in this case, drowning in a huge red pool. Eventually, the earth dries out, the fibres stiffen, and the strips are arranged and stacked in groups of varying height that stretch across the space. Their presence is simple and geometric, resulting in a sleek and refined composition reminiscent of Minimalism.

Using this same material of clay-soaked fique cloth, this time cut into long, thin strips and stacked as a shallow pile *Eva* (2013) runs down the edges of a wall, providing a frame for this white surface. The strips accompany the wall's vertical edge and bend when they reach the floor, lending it a pliable appearance. A work that uses the same title, *Eva* (2013), comprises a square canvas that is saturated in clay and draped from a corner of the room. The minimalist form imposes itself on the wall instead of delineating it. Its red colour is dull and opaque, a mass responding to the force of gravity pulling it down. These installations challenge the expected possibilities of clay as a material; it is simultaneously fine but heavy, stiff yet elastic, organic and natural though ordered and structural.

In Morelos's practice red is ubiquitous. In her early work, the pigment is used to speak of her native Colombia's history of violence – notably in *Color que soy* ('Colour That I Am', 2002), paintings of coffin-like forms depicted in various earthen tones – and then in works such as *No es un río, es una madre* to emphasize the vitality of blood rather than its darker connotations. In her clay forms, the primitive pigment is naturally embedded within the material. Physical matter follows a natural course as it is built up over time, layer upon layer, through a process of sedimentation. By bringing it into the exhibition display space, the artist brings the viewer into a direct relationship with the physicality and scale of that 'redness'. Her minimalist forms not only signal the 'container', but also the body that stands in, and in front of, it. Morelos initiates an encounter with nature, and a contemplation of our bodies in nature, blurring the limits between one and the other. For her, red signifies both our blood and the natural energy of a flowing river itself. • Catalina Imizcoz



Delcy Morelos Born 1967, Tierralta, Cordoba, Colombia. Live and works in Bogotá, Colombia. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'La sombra terrestre', Fundación Gilberto Álzate Avendaño, Bogotá, Colombia; 2014 – 'Agua salada organizada', Alonso Garcés Galería, Bogotá, Colombia; 2012 – 'Eva', Gertrude Contemporary Gallery, Melbourne, Australia; 'Si yo fuera tela', L'Appartament 22, Rabat, Marruecos, Morocco; 2006 – Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast, UK; 'Flaxarts Studios Residency Programme', Belfast, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'One as another', Havremagasinet, Boden, Sweden, 2015 – 'XI Bienal de Monterrey', Mexico; 2014 – 'Selva cosmopolítica', Museo de arte de La Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá; 2013 – '43 Salón (inter) Nacional de Artistas', Medellín, Colombia; 2009 – '7° BIENAL DO MERCOSUL: GRITO E ESCUTA', Porto Alegre, Brazil; 2001 'ARS 01, UNFOLDING PERSPECTIVES', KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki.

lcy Morelos

↑ *Eva*, 2013
Clay and mixed medium on canvas
210 × 190 cm
(82¼ × 74¾ in)

↗ *Eva*, 2013
Clay and mixed medium on yute
Variable dimensions

→ *No es un río es una madre*, 2014
Clay and mixed medium on yute
160 × 100 cm
(63 × 39⅜ in)

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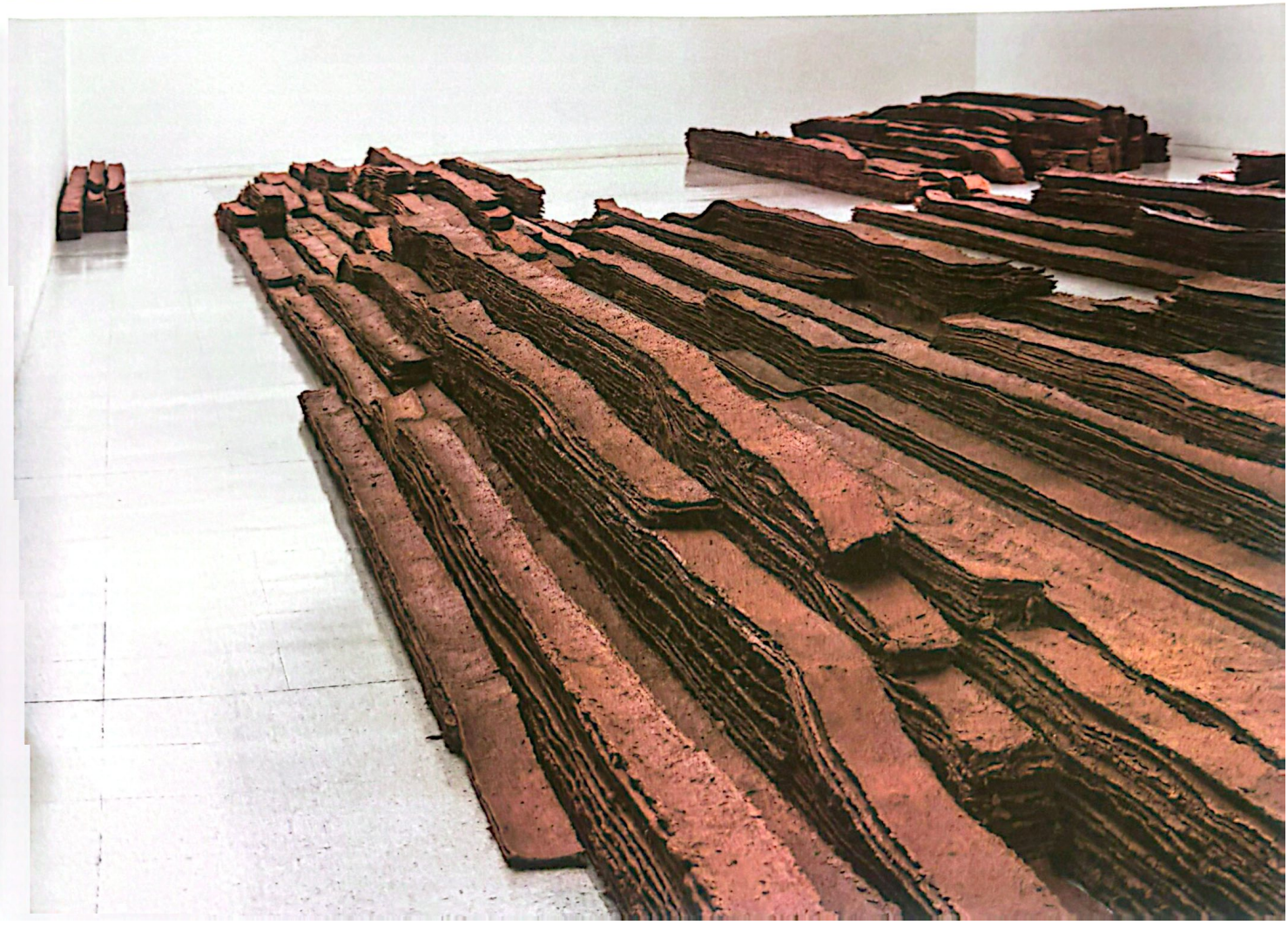

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There is something quite mesmerising about artists like Los Angeles-based Kristen Morgin who recreate everyday objects as pieces of art, capturing and transforming things that hold both personal and shared, cultural meaning. For Morgin, these objects have included books, toys, games, musical instruments, cars and portions of cars. She renders these in unfired clay, working in painstaking detail to replicate these familiar forms, applying paint or coloured cement to tint the clay's natural greyish brown, but with a sense of eroded glory as her forms appear slightly crumpled, perforated or broken, faded or dirtied.

Morgin undergirds the delicate clay bodies of her sculptures with armatures made with metal and wood – scaffolding that oftentimes shows through fragile coverings. In *Madonna with Tricycle* (2013), a children's bike is depicted in a highly realistic manner, and while made of clay, it appears to be coated in a metal rust of deep orange iron oxide. Upon a saddle studded with pale blue and red stars, a tiny Madonna figurine prays, hands pressed together in devotion. The small, holy model could be interpreted as another cast-aside plaything, forgotten with abandoned bike that hasn't been touched for years.

As a student in rural New York, Morgin moved from making her fired ceramic clay figures into using unfired clay, the delicacy of the material offering a welcome patina to her carefully formed objects. Bucking tradition and risking the permanence of her work, Morgin's unusual material approach leaves her objects looking like unearthed artefacts from some ancient civilization. In reality, most of these date to a past far less removed, calling back to the decades that still dominate American material culture – the mid-twentieth century, or in other words, the time of the artist's own childhood. *The Bradys* (2015), for example, recalls the grid depicting the Brady Bunch's faces during this television series' opening credits. Supplementing these characters' individual personalities with those of pop stars including Madonna and Cher, old album covers are reconstructed on clay and plastered with stickers; representing the Bradys that you might expect to see, a mood of dated contemporaneity is palpable.

Her *Mighty Mouse* (2006) sculpture creates a child-sized version of the barrel-chested rodent, his yellow and red costumed body teetering on top of a rough wooden stand. A familiar figure to American children, Mighty Mouse was introduced in 1942, and later became a staple of the channel CBS's Saturday morning cartoon programming. *Smoky Loves You Sugar Dancer* (2010) includes to scale copies of two toy horses, the kind meant to be ridden by children, with images, numbers and logos decorating their sides. Morgin has reconstructed copies of *LIFE* magazine (*Picasso Bunny*, 2012), as well as crushed Marlboro packs (*Marlboro Man*, 2013) and a full set of the game Monopoly (*Monopoly*, 2007), complete with a game board, faux currency and tiny red houses. Even her life-sized car sculptures (like *Topolino*, 2003) are made fragile, their heft and metal reduced to shrouds of crumbling dirt. Fraught with nostalgia, Morgin's works play off our collective memories and speak powerfully to a past quickly receding, fragile like unfired clay or the dried wings of a butterfly. • Jens Hoffmann

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Kristen Morgin Born 1968, Brunswick, Georgia. Lives and works in Gardena, California. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Beverly Hills; 2016 – 'My Best to You Little Girl-Boy', Anthony Meier Fine Art, San Francisco; 'So It Goes', A-B Projects, Claremont University, California; 2015 – 'Messages to My Twenty Year Old Self', Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Beverly Hills; 2014 – 'The Super Can Man and Other Illustrated Classics', Zach Feuer Fine Art, Los Angeles; 'Things I Learned from Comic Books and Bumper Stickers', Jane Hartsook Gallery, Greenwich House Pottery, New York; 2012 – 'Snow White in Evening Wear and Other Works', Marc Selwyn Fine Art, California. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Interstitial', Pasadena Museum of California Art; 2016 – 'XIII Bienal de Cuenca', Impermanencia, Ecuador; 'Tales That Must be Told', Cypress College Art Gallery, California; 'Renwick Craft Invitational: Visions and Revisions' Smithsonian American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery, Washington, DC; 2014 – 'Under the Table', Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas; 2012 – 'The Stumbling Present: Ruins in Contemporary Art', University of California, Santa Barbara Art, Design, and Architecture Museum; 2011 – '12th Istanbul Biennial'.

Kristen Morgin





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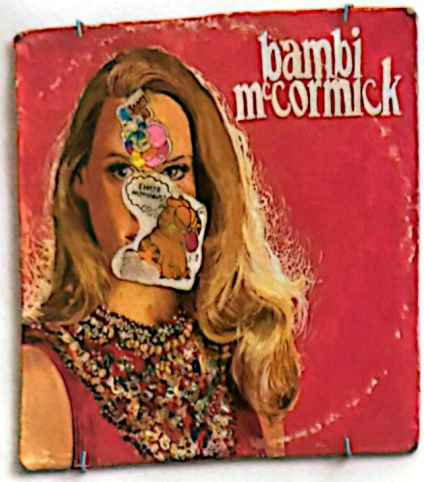





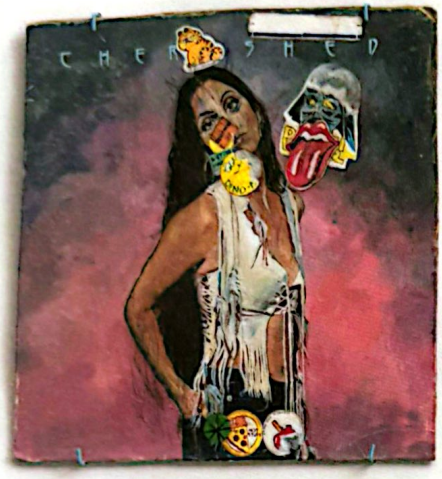











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Ron Nagle's sculptures are typically modest in size, the scale of a ceramic cup or vessel remaining as a ghostly referent in even the most abstract of his pieces. Nagle is a veteran of the ceramics world and has been working with clay since the late 1950s. Now nearing eighty years old, he is still based in his hometown of San Francisco.

Often considered a key member of the Bay Area's ceramics scene, Nagle studied with the renowned Peter Voulkos, and began teaching ceramics at colleges in San Francisco and Oakland, including Mills College where he taught from 1978 to 2010. Nagle uses vibrant, supercharged colours that receive multiple firings and are completed with china paint: high-shine aquas, mint greens, cotton candy pinks, firey oranges and serene lilacs jostle with one another. Laid over his abstract forms, these colours bring out something definitively 'Pop' in his works. And though he doesn't stray far from the scale of the traditional ceramicist's muse – the cup – Nagle's works are planted decisively in the spectrum of fine art (the division between art and craft being something that Nagle has had to struggle against throughout his career) – in 2013, a selection of his sculptures were presented in *The Encyclopedic Palace* exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennale, and he received his first solo museum exhibition at the San Diego Museum of Art in 2015.

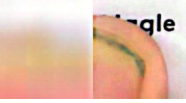
His sculptures are always based on drawings and, though they exist in three dimensions, there is a flatness to the works that he strives for. In *Cult Classic* (2016), a glistening pool of liquid turquoise seemingly drips off a raised platform, a slight flash of electric yellow and scarlet red rooting the structure to the ground. In pale, mottled lilac, a monolith appears broken and chipped, its textured interior sitting in contrast to the smooth base. This could be a disturbed gravestone, from which an amorphous, gorgeous blob emerges. *Intangible Assets* (2016), uses a similar turquoise tone, but this time coating a flat – yet deep – stucco textured form reminiscent of an artist's palette. A blob of bubble-gum pink runs down its side, the only interruption in this monochrome plane. Above, a form suggestive of a leafless, drooping tree stoops to observe the fleshy trickle of colour.

Merging colour and form and conceiving of his works in profile, Nagle's clay rises and bends, bubbles and squiggles, creases and folds to create highly evocative abstract forms. Some of these suggest something anthropomorphic – a phallic rise, a curving tongue or a rotund rear. At other times, his geometries resist direct comparisons, while still seeming active, dynamic and alive. Over decades of working with the medium, Nagle has explored the playful, the polished and the perverse, while always pushing the boundaries and the conventions of the ceramic form. • Jens Hoffmann





n Nagle Born 1939, San Francisco. Lives and works San Francisco. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2019 – 'Ron gle: Handsome Drifter', Institute of Contemporary Boston, and touring to Berkeley Art Museum Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Los eles; 2016 – 'Ron Nagle: Ice Breaker', Matthew ks Gallery, Los Angeles; 2015 – 'Ron Nagle: Five lock Shadow', Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; – 'Chewing Gum Monuments', Museum Boijmans Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; 'Peripheral nition', San Diego Museum of Art, California. Selected p Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Campaign for Art: emporary', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, ornia; 'Pavlova's Dawg and Other Works by Gallery ts', Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles; 2013 – ncyclopaedia Palace', 55th Venice Biennale.



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Ron Nagle Born 1939, San Francisco. Lives and works in San Francisco. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2019 – 'Ron Nagle: Handsome Drifter', Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and touring to Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Los Angeles; 2016 – 'Ron Nagle: Ice Breaker', Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles; 2015 – 'Ron Nagle: Five O'Clock Shadow', Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; 2014 – 'Chewing Gum Monuments', Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; 'Peripheral Cognition', San Diego Museum of Art, California. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Campaign for Art: Contemporary', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; 'Pavlova's Dawg and Other Works by Gallery Artists', Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles; 2013 – 'The Encyclopaedia Palace', 55th Venice Biennale.

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Ruby Neri first found success under a different name and in a different medium: her graffiti images of horses, made under the alias of 'Reminisce', could be found all over her hometown of San Francisco in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since her subsequent switch to sculpture – and to a gallery setting – human figures not equine ones have become her subject. Neri says, however, that she still wants her work 'to have a street edge, like some kid broke in with a spray can'. She's referring specifically here to the buccaneer way she applies paint to her pieces, all splotches and splats in discordant colours, that suggest defacement more than decoration. The figures themselves are often combinations of plaster and clay, which Neri has grafted together using resin. They seem to have emerged from the centre of the earth rather than the kiln, as if risen up as bodies fully formed. Perhaps Neri has been reading Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) and his call for artists to take their inspiration from terra firma.

Some of the figures stand, some sit; some bend, some stretch; others walk, while those in groups occasionally engage in would-be conversation. They recall African Fang masks (Picasso's inspiration for *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907), as well as the spindly figures of Giacometti (1901–1966) or Oceanic totems. The pieces have a faux-naif aesthetic to them, often with holes for eyes and thick black outlines; look closely and you might even see Neri's fingerprints on their necks and backs.

In her most recent work, Neri has taken to working solely in clay for the first time. The result is a group of vital, highly sexualized representations of the naked, female form: both as depictions that are airbrush glazed on the side of huge cylindrical vessels and as freestanding sculptures in their own right. Their poses, often contorted, leave little to the imagination; their erogenous zones are disproportionately large; their facial expressions mix ecstasy and hysteria, suggesting untold private pleasures (or perhaps pains).

You could never mistake these ladies for nudes of Classical tradition; instead, they call to mind the earth goddesses of Ice Age sculpture. Yet with their high-heeled shoes, it's also apparent that we're dealing with depictions of modern women. As she did with her horse graffiti – recalling the ancient cave paintings of Lascaux, on the streets of modern California – Neri shows her gift for conjuring a sense of old and new in one and the same art work. • Alastair Smart





Ruby Neri Born 1970, San Francisco. Lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Shows: 2016 – 'Slaves and Humans', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 'Villa of Mysteries', Los Angeles Museum of Art; 2015 – 'The Big Feel', Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco; 2012 – 'Sculpture', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2009 – 'This is me, is that you?', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2006 – John Natsoulas Gallery, Davis, California; 2005 – China Art Objects, Los Angeles; 2003 – Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection', Rubell Family Collection, Miami; 2014 – 'Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California', Oakland Museum of California, in collaboration with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 'Caught Looking', Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, California; 'The Possible', Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California; 2013 – 'Energy That is All Around: Mission School', Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute and touring to Grey Art Gallery, New York University; 'Busted', High Line Art, New York; 2012 – 'Made in L.A. 2012', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'At Home/Not at Home: Works from the Collection of Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg', CCS Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

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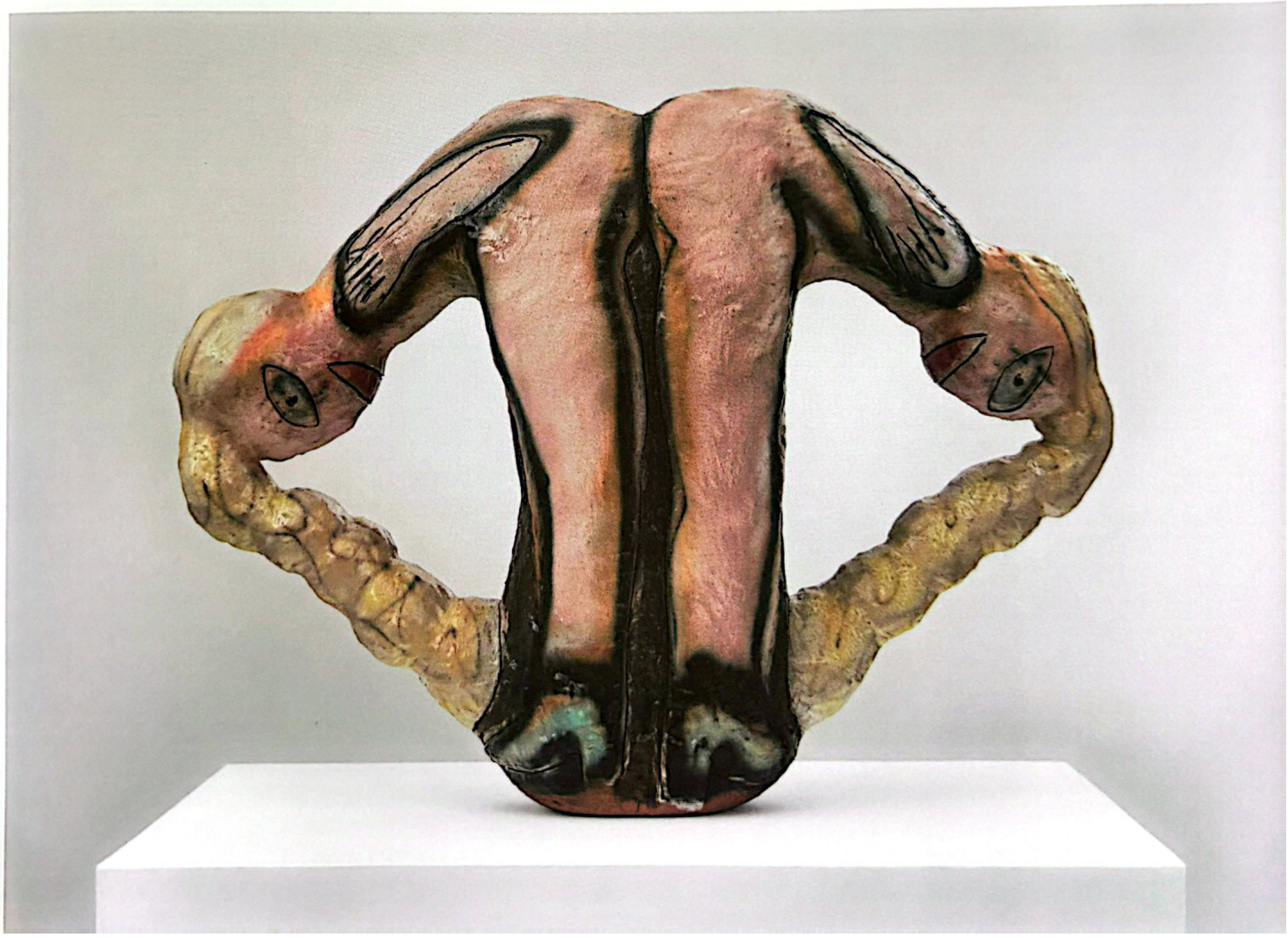

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Central to the American artist Erica Nickol's practice is her ongoing material enquiry into the duality of human existence: the physicality of our bodies versus thought and spirit. She considers this theme within the parameters of sculpture and ceramics, working on the cusp of these mediums to utilize the malleable, corporeal properties of porcelain – delicate and fragile once fired – alongside the untold stories of discarded, found objects. Her creations evolve into works that subtly evoke the human form and seem to breathe, tense, reach or recoil, with an ever-present tussle between total abstraction and echoes of figuration.

In Nickol's own words, the medium of porcelain 'suggests the weight of corporeality as effectively as it captures the translucence of spiritual existence', but the material is also unruly – it slips and morphs during the firing process in a way that mimics the inevitable gravitational release of the body's mass over a lifetime. Take, for example, *The Tie That Binds* (2014), in which folds of porcelain, marble-like in the smooth, natural way that heat and gravity has worked on it in the kiln, have slumped to form a suggestion of three bowed torsos arranged kneeling in a line upon a rusting, metal-framed plinth. The loosely configured arms – implied only by the draping of sleeve-like folds – contrast with a taught line of rope that binds the three forms together.

The artist often alludes to a doubling of, or counter-balance between, two entities in her titles. *Twice Your Weight* (2011), *Mine and Yours* (2011) and *Between Two* (2015) all register a relational push-and-pull that's suggestive of each work's contradictions: the formal versus the uneven, the carnal versus the man-made, or gravity versus suspension. They are themes that spanned much of the American sculptor Eva Hesse's work – and indeed Nickol's predilection for improvised materials such as rope, wire, wood and ceramics is also redolent of Hesse, who, like Nickol, sought to embody (rather than figuratively represent) the human form in her sculptures.

In *All it Contains* (2015) Nickol skirts around literal figuration. A rounded, sack-like form that has been enshrined in pure white porcelain drapes heavily from two rusting pins affixed to charred floorboards, now upended to form a vertical panel that the viewer faces. The work's title is a misnomer, the sack is empty, but crucially the porcelain itself allows an act of containment – the locking of time and space that occurs upon the porcelain hardening, materially capturing a gesture or moment of touch. 'A huge part of how I work is thinking about how we feel or show our emotions physically,' the artist has said, 'almost like creating an environment or situation for the body … This is why in my work the porcelain pieces are the body. They are the human element.' • Josephine New



↑ *All it Contains*, 2015
Porcelain, wood, nails
46 × 30 × 18 cm
(18 × 12 × 7 in)

↗ *Mine and Yours*, 2011
Porcelain, bracket, rope
213 × 15 × 61 cm
(84 × 6 × 24 in)

↗↗ *Between Two*, 2015
Porcelain, wood,
found objects, wire
23 × 64 × 18 cm
(9 × 25 × 7 in)

→ *The Tie that Binds*, 2014
Porcelain, rope, found objects,
steel, wood
157 × 91 × 30 cm
(62 × 36 × 12 in)

Erica Nickol Born 1981, Cincinnati, Ohio. Lives and works in Cincinnati. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2013 – 'Flat Floor Fiesta', The Union Project, Pittsburgh; 2012 – 'Baum Gallery MFA Biennial', Baum Gallery, Conway, Arkansas. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Present at Creation', BNY Mellon Satellite Gallery (Contemporary Craft), Pittsburgh; 'Edward Eberle Retrospective', Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh; 2015 – '5th Annual Workhouse Clay National', Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, Virginia; '3D@MGG', Morgan Contemporary Glass Gallery, Pittsburgh; 2014 – 'Transformation 9: Contemporary Works in Ceramics', Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh; 2011 – 'The Space Between: MFA Thesis Exhibit', Borowsky Gallery, Philadelphia; '2011 MFA Juried Exhibition', First Street Gallery, New York; 2010 – '2010 WIP Show', Aronson Gallery, Philadelphia; 'Future Excavations', 224 Gallery, Philadelphia; 2009 – '2D or not 2D', Aronson Gallery; '2009 WIP Show', Rosenwald Wolf Gallery; Philadelphia.

Erica Nickol

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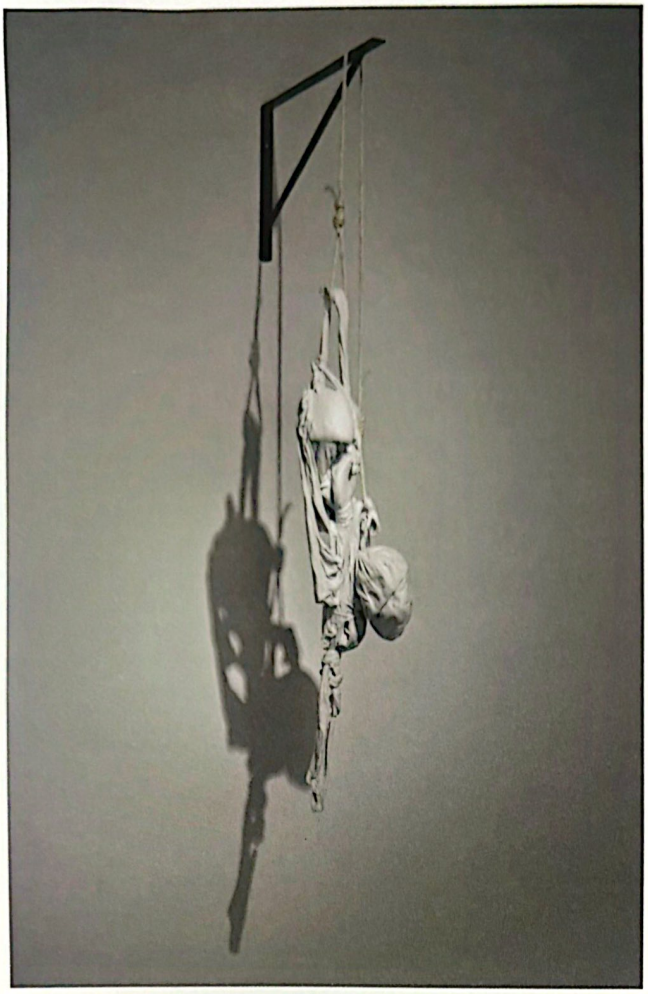

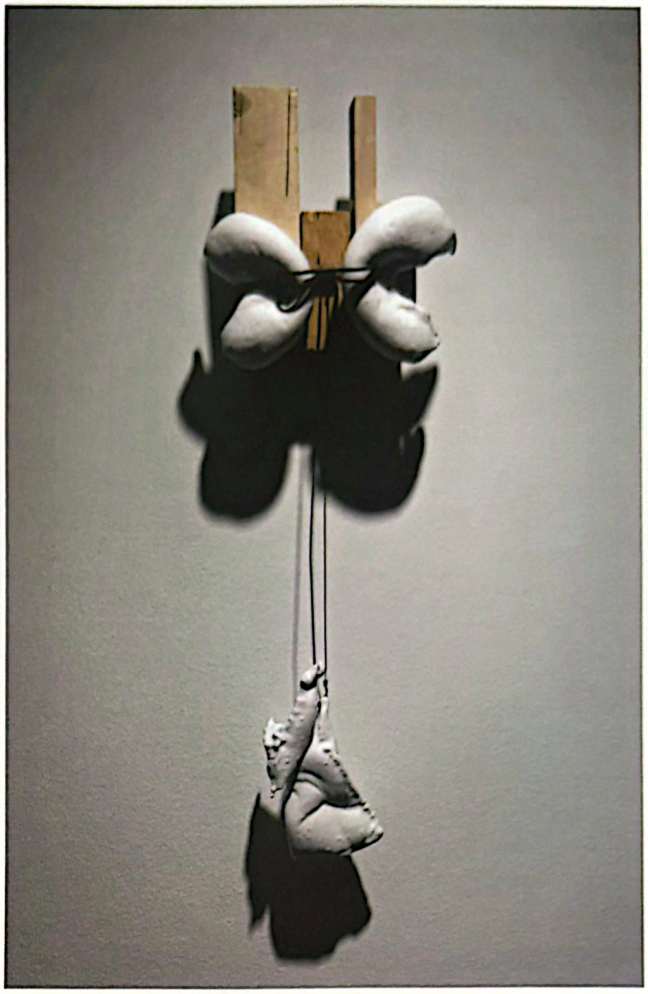



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William J. O'Brien describes himself as a stranger to the ceramics world. 'I offended crafts people,' he says, having studied ceramics as a teenager at his local community art centre in Newbury, Ohio, and then as an undergraduate art student in Chicago. 'I see ceramics representing the adolescent child in me, ceramics as the rebellious underdog of the art world,' he reflects today. A prolific worker, his multiple clay forms are at once beautiful, bizarre, playful and deceptively simple. Presented alone, or en masse upon a large table, they reflect a vivid, uneasy interior world. There is a distinctive anthropomorphic quality to the artist's works, some pieces suggesting human faces, bodies and limbs. Others are more ornamental and abstract in form, while some are stacked together as vertical, totemic columns.

Expanding on his ceramic works, O'Brien has also explored other media. Drawing is a mainstay, a two-dimensional parallel to his work in ceramic: simple, accessible, inexpensive and abundant. Autobiographical in theme, O'Brien's early ceramic pieces reflect his interest in the nature and status of the medium, and its capacity to capture something of the artist's own persona. 'The hierarchy and economy of materials; the struggle in the self – what it means to be an outsider' are driving forces for O'Brien, who describes clay as a rebellious medium: at once 'polite and formal' but also 'visceral'.

O'Brien's works, such as *Untitled* (2014), often take the form of ceramic heads, inspired by the artist's own features, simply – even crudely – rendered. Quasi-abstract representations of the body, its weight and mass, draw inspiration from the tactile, sensual art of Louise Bourgeois and Annette Messager: 'the autobiography of the body is in the materials,' O'Brien has said. His religious upbringing and queer identity have been profoundly influential on his artistic identity, and he has described his project as trying to merge the sexual and the sacred. He also cites his relationship with his aunt, who had cerebral palsy, as significant, for her sophisticated non-verbal communication.

Following his undergraduate studies, O'Brien volunteered in San Francisco with Creativity Explored, an organization for artists with developmental disabilities. This led him to consider the hierarchies of insider/outsider art: 'I questioned why the academy had its place holders,' he says, leading him to 'play with skill and non-skill' through the use of inexpensive materials and simple, repetitive coloured-pencil drawings. 'A big part of finding my voice was feeling I never belonged.'

More recently, his father's death, and a significant studio fire in 2012, saw O'Brien address themes of loss. Minimalism and the structuring device of the grid are also important, yet works such as *Untitled* (2016) are 'bleeding with emotion'. The collaborative AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington, DC, represents the intersection of the two – 'the biggest minimalist work in the world' – and he similarly tries to insert emotional content into his own art. The result is a practice at once humble and sublime, imperfect, yet emotionally spiky and true. • Rachel Kent

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William J. O'Brien Born 1975, Eastlake, Ohio. Lives and works in Chicago. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'William J. O'Brien', Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville; 'The Protectors', Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; 2014 – William J. O'Brien: Water Sounds', Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo; 'Six Circles : Four Squares', Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; 2013 – Wet 'N Wild, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; 2012 – The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas; 2011 – The Renaissance Society, The University of Chicago. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Wild Style: Exhibition of Figurative Art', Peres Projects, Berlin; 'Pattern and Process', Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois; 2015 – 'Surrealism: The Conjured Life', Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; 'Defying Gravity: Interventions in Clay', Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Idaho; 'Organic Sculpture', Alison Jacques Gallery, London; 2014 – 'Art on Paper 2014: The 43rd Exhibition', Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina; 'Thread Lines', The Drawing Center, New York; 2012 – 'Making is Thinking', Witte de With, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

W[illegible] O'Brien



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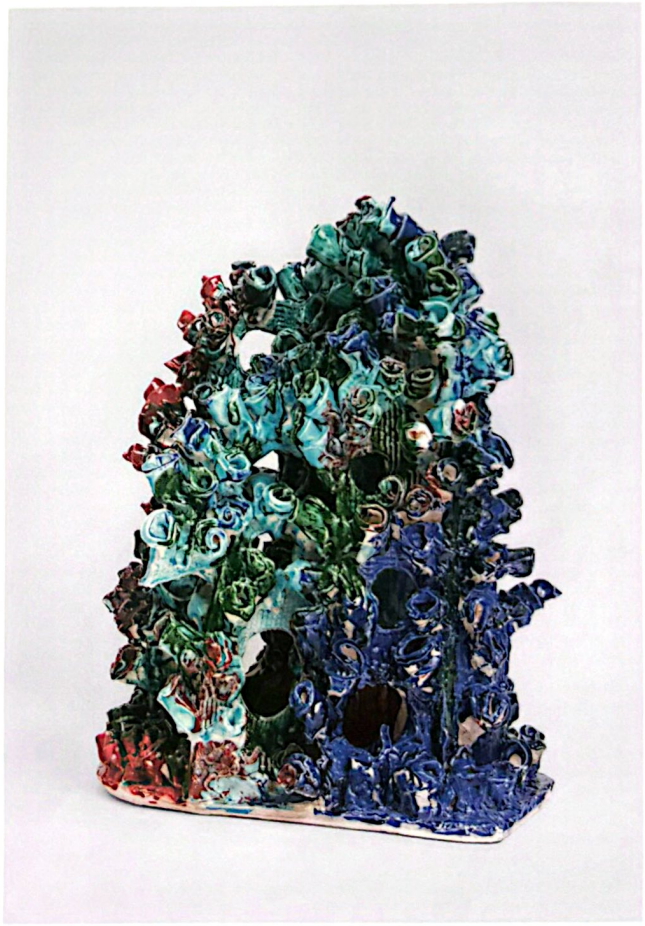

Untitled, 2014
Glazed ceramic and steel
210.8 × 61 × 61 cm
(83 × 24 × 24 in)

Clockwise from top left:
Untitled, 2016
Ceramic
52.1 × 35.6 × 58.4 cm
(20 ½ × 14 × 23 in)

Untitled, 2015
Ceramic
53.3 × 55.9 × 38.1 cm
(21 × 22 × 15 in)

Untitled, 2016
Ceramic
55.88 × 46.99 × 27.94 cm
(22 × 18 ½ × 11 in)

Untitled, 2014
Glazed ceramic
50.8 × 43.2 × 45.7 cm
(20 × 17 × 18 in)

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Paulina Olowska's long-standing engagement with the historical avant-garde, 'low' craft traditions and the vitality of the local has led her to use many mediums. Whatever her format, Olowska's bringing to light of buried histories regularly intersects with feminist concerns. A 2016 series of paintings, made in Rabka-Zdrój, the Polish town where she lives, borrowed from Slavic folklore and the Nabi painters, and made 'muses' of women from old gardening magazines; and this interplay is equally apparent in her glazed sculptures. Both *Saint Catherine* and *Holy Mary from Rabka*, two large-scale ceramics from 2014, draw on polychrome wooden sculptures from the artist's town, the former showing the martyred saint, the latter the Virgin and Child. As opposed to marble or bronze, wooden sculpture, as perceived by Olowska, was associated with poorer, smaller communities and connected to devotion. Reworking these statues in ceramic, with glittering monochromatic glazes, Olowska suspended the figures pointedly between past and present.

At the same time she recreated other female archetypes: the mourning mother, in *Our Lady of Sorrows (Mater Dolorosa) (After Pedro Roldan)* (2014), and the holy protector, in *Madonna of Protective Cloak from Ravensburg (After Michel Erhart or Fredrich Schramm)* (2014). Yet, her taste for fifteenth-century church sculpture aside, Olowska isn't solely concerned with religious iconography but with a wider sense of the female in the cultural unconscious. This is evident in both a ceramic version of a nineteenth-century carving from Dresden, *Mermaid with Old Man (After Robert Diaz)*, and *The New Salome (After Max Klinger)* (both 2014), the latter a reworking of the German artist's sculpture of the Biblical femme fatale, in shimmering submarine tones of blue, green and brown, radiating edgy strength. At her knees, meanwhile, are two heads: the death mask of Herod and the decapitated John the Baptist. Any unthinking associations of craft with weakness or femininity are summarily undone.

Olowska's *Pieta* (2015) frames such concerns in even starker terms. The figure of Mary, daggers stabbing into her schematic heart as if she'd been martyred herself, holds a Christ figure who, atypically for this subject matter, is smaller than her – a facet of the original, a woodcut of the Pieta from the Museum of Rabka. The work refocuses the gaze on this iconographic form and becomes a question. Its dazzle and fierce imagery reverse preconceptions of ceramics as something less than 'art'. It is both invested in its iconography and seemingly questioning of the Catholic Church's contradictory veneration of Mary and prevailing sexist attitudes; and it asks what the value of religious imagery might be for nonbelievers. All of these elements are baked together, reflecting – one might hazard – both Olowska's own history of growing up in Poland under Communism and the search for meaning that came after it, and a wider belief in progress, even if one must go back to move forward. In 2009, Olowska told one interviewer that, 'I always love to reference history to give expression to a certain type of belief in progress.' The same year, an art magazine asked her what she liked the look of. She simply said, 'Ceramics'. • Martin Herbert

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Paulina Olowska Born 1976, Gdansk, Poland. Lives and works in Rabka-Zdrój, Poland, and London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Wisteria, Mysteria, Hysteria', Metro Pictures, New York; 2015 – 'Montana Ensemble', 8, rue Saint-Bon, Paris; 'The Mother An Unsavoury Play in Two Acts and an Epilogue', Tate Modern, London; 'Needle / Nadle', Kunstpreis Aachen Award Recipient, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; 2014 – 'Ceramics', Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong; 'The Spell of Warsaw', Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; 2013 – 'Au Bonheur des Dames', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 'Pavilionesque', Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Mauvaises Herbes: Sarah Crowner, Caitlin Keogh, Paulina Olowska', Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong; 'Si Seded Non Is', The Breeder, Athens; 'Sputterances', Metro Pictures, New York; 'An Uncanny Likeness', Simon Lee Gallery, New York; 2016 – 'A Slow Succession with Many Interruptions', SF MOMA, San Francisco; 'Portraits', Skarstedt Gallery, New York.





Paulina Olowska

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↖ *Our Lady of Sorrows (Mater Dolorosa) (after Pedro Roldan)*, 2014
Ceramic
43 × 30 × 30 cm
(16 ¾ × 11 ¾ × 11 ¾ in)

← *Pieta*, 2015
Ceramic
55 × 44 × 30 cm
(21 ⅝ × 17 ⅜ × 11 ¾ in)

↑ *Holy Mary From Rabka*, 2014
Ceramic
114 × 30.5 × 30 cm
(44 ⅞ × 12 ⅜ × 11 ¾ in)

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A surreal humour pervades the polychrome ceramics of Luigi Ontani. Take, for example, the life-size sculptures of his *ErmEstetica* series (1995–ongoing), which appear somewhere between Egyptian coffins and classical herms (Greco-Roman sculptures featuring a carved head above a plain, usually quadrangular, lower section). Each one represents a different figure from history or mythology and is decorated with a colourful array of idiosyncratic detail. *ErmEstetica del PavonDante* (1995) is dressed to resemble Dante, complete with crimson red robe, laurel wreath and, curiously, a third eye on his forehead. In *ErmEstetica Europe* (2003), Europa, the Phoenician noblewoman of Greek mythology, is decorated with the stars of the European flag, while the ancient Greek mathematician Pythagoras appears covered in ornate numerals in *ErmEstetica Pythagorica* (2007). *ErmEstetica CristoFORO Colombo* (1996) reimagines the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus with blue hair and a comical sailing ship headdress; towards its base is a protruding bird's foot, a visual pun on Columbus's name ('colombo' meaning 'pigeon' in Italian). These mischievous ceramics, which are filled with word play and esoteric references, take another surreal turn when one realizes that the face of each one is modelled after Ontani himself.

Since the 1970s Ontani has placed himself firmly at the centre of his work, eschewing art movements and trends in order to pursue a highly individual and introspective path. Although the Italian artist's singular practice is impossible to categorize, the notion of identity is central to all that he does. Whether working with performance, photography, painting, sculpture or his celebrated ceramics, the presence of the artist's body is a constant. His transformations, which draw inspiration from world history, art history, mythology, folklore and fairy tales, have seen him appear as Leonardo da Vinci, Garibaldi, Saint Sebastian, Pinocchio, the Roman emperor Hadrian and the Hindu deity Shiva, among many others. One particularly elaborate ceramic, *NapoleonCentaurOntano* (2003), sees him transformed into Napoleon, but here he is reimagined as a bare-chested, sexually potent centaur. The piece sets up a binary opposition between myth and history, just one of the many intriguing dualities at play in Ontani's seductive work, which elsewhere include sacred and profane, male and female, and human and divine.

Not all of Ontani's ceramics, however, are large and flamboyant. His recent 'Nature extramorte' series (2015) comprises a number of much smaller, subdued works. Indeed, many are conventional vessels such as jugs and vases. The series was created as an homage to the Italian still-life painter Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964), being first exhibited in Morandi's former home in Bologna, which is now a museum. Inspired by the artist's paintings, each of Ontani's ceramics has a painted counterpart from which it derives. But these vessels are not simple reproductions for, as with all of the artist's work, his visage materializes uncannily throughout the collection: water jugs and wine bottles, complete with eyes, noses and mouths, carry his distinctive, deadpan expression. In Ontani's world, even the most mundane of objects are elevated to fantastical stature. • David Trigg

Luigi Ontani Born 1943, Vergato, Bologna, Italy. Lives and works in Rome. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Luigi Ontani – Chi è fuori è fuori chi è dentro è', Galleria civica d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Turin, Italy; 2014 – 'Luigi Ontani,' GAMEC Museum, Bergamo, Italy; 2012 – 'Luigi Ontani', Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; 'Déjeuner sur l'art', Le Consortium, Dijon, France; 2011 – 'Rivoltartealtrove', Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; 2010 – AuroboruSerpentine, The Serpentine Gallery, London, and touring to Museo Andersen, Rome; 2009 – 'CapoDioMonte', Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Ennesima', Triennale, Milan, Italy; 'Per formare una collezione', Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples; 2015 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2012 – 'A Bigger Splash: Painting After Performance', Tate Modern, London; 2010 – 'The Long weekend', Tate Film Programme, Tate Modern, London; 'Spazio. Works from MAXXI collection', MAXXI, Rome; 2009 – 'A Contemporary Metaphor', Chelsea Art Museum, New York; 'Biennale Cuvée', Linz, Austria.





Luigi Ontani

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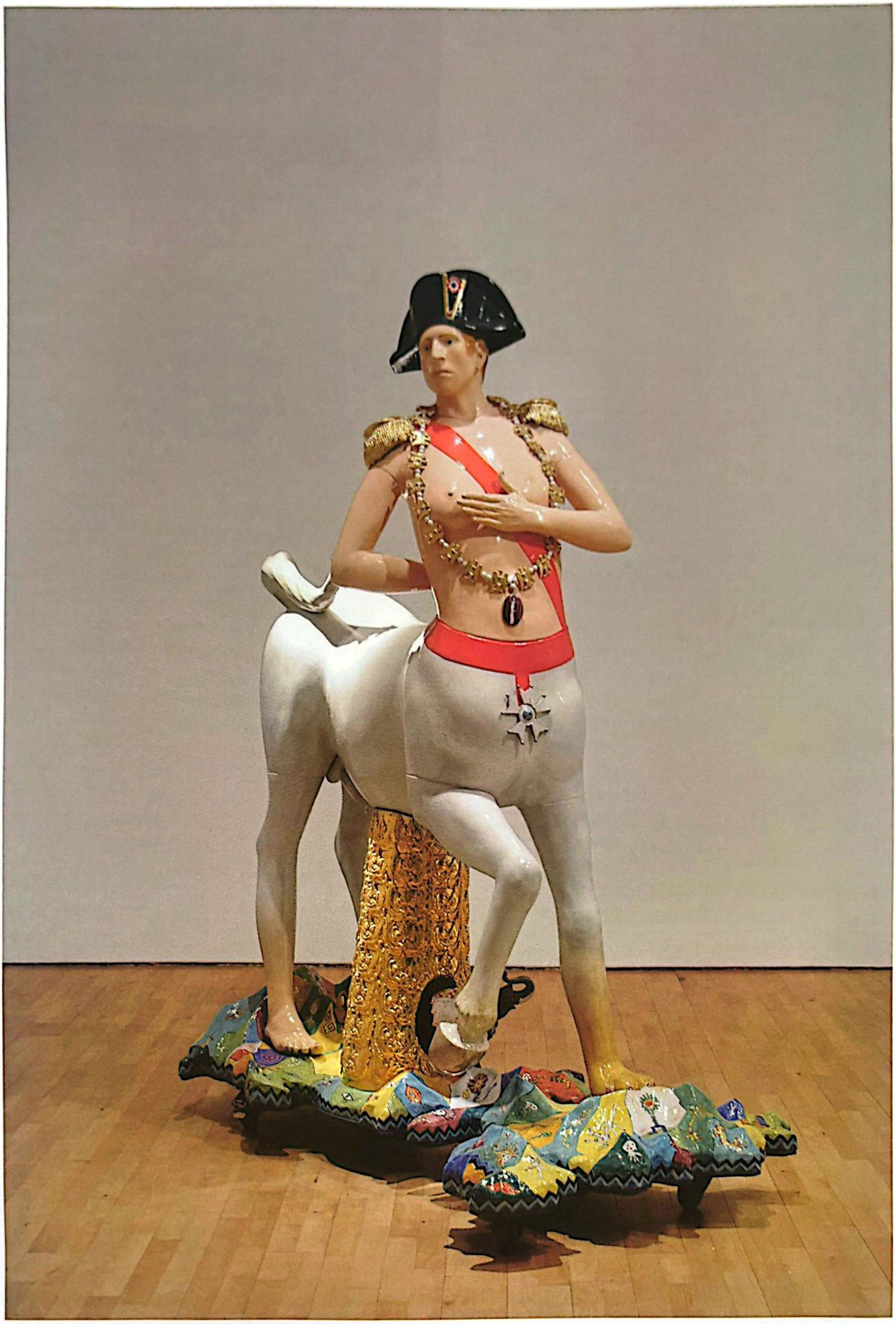

ErmEstetica CristoFORO Colombo, 1996
Polychrome ceramic sculpture
206 × 52 × 64 cm
(81 ¼ × 20 ½ × 25 ¼ in)

Nature extramorte antropomorfane, 2015
Polychrome ceramic sculpture
90 × Ø 45 cm (35 ½ × 13 ¾ in)

NapoleonCentaurOntano, 2003
Polychrome ceramic sculpture
200 × 160 × 85 cm
(78 ¾ × 63 × 33 ½ in)

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Consistent in its creativity, playfulness, formal power and intellectual rigour, Gabriel Orozco's work resists being limited to any single medium. Like other 'post-studio' artists, he dismisses the conventional studio with its elaborate systems of production; living between his native Mexico, France and the United States – and in more recent years, Japan – he works flexibly and looks to the world around him for his materials. His interest in clay is not the clay of the artefact, of art history or the studio, but of the brick and tile factory. He is drawn to processes that reject the conventionally sculptural or artisanal, and instead focus on an economy of gesture, as well as a conceptual openness to spontaneity and the accidental.

These tendencies are epitomized in the work that brought Orozco to prominence, *My Hands Are My Heart* (1998). As its title suggests, it is a heart, shaped from the simplest of gestures – the hands of the artist pressed into a lump of clay from a brick factory in Cholula, Mexico. It is at once a sculpture of fired clay, a photographic diptych of the action, and the action itself. Ultimately, the work is an enquiry into the minimum effort required to create an object.

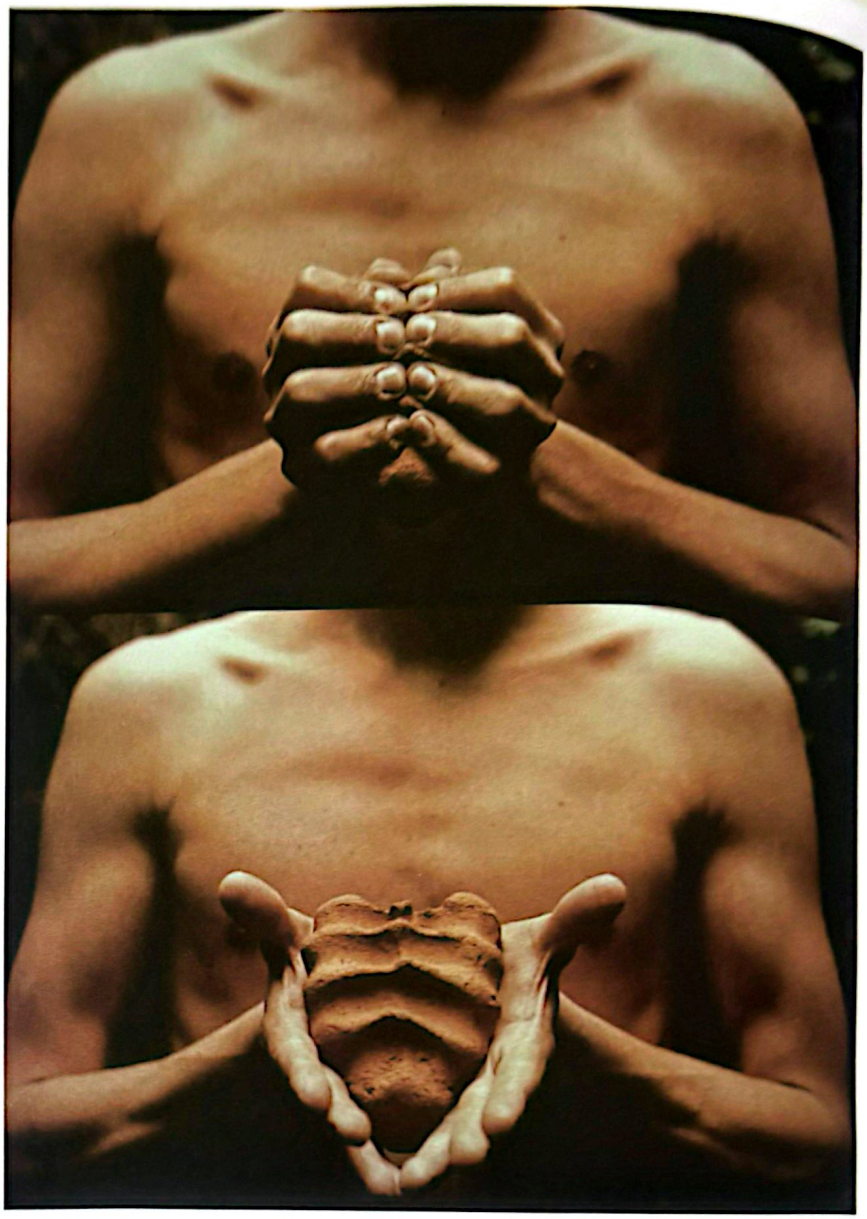
From 2002 Orozco would use summers spent in Burgundy to experiment with clay, working with a denser, porous clay in a ceramic workshop. For documenta 11 in 2002, he displayed *Cazuelas (Beginnings)*, seventy-one vessels on tables, influenced by his discovery of terracotta 'pots' being used as grave markers on the outskirts of Timbuktu. Resonating with his wider practice – which includes works inspired by chess, billiards and ping pong – there is a game associated with the making of this work. A potter would turn a pot on the wheel while Orozco threw balls of clay from various distances onto the pot, producing distorted vessels characterized by their proximity to, yet lack of, utilitarian purpose.

This activity progressed onto a series of objects moulded by hand in a way that echoes the processes of breadmaking (the clay fired in a wood oven, as bread is); the results are eerily reminiscent of body or animal parts, for example *Torso* (2006), a mass of carbonized terracotta clay folded and rolled on the floor into a recognizable bodily form which corresponds to the weight of the artist.

In *Orthocenter* (2012) a piece of clay is turned by hand around a small wooden ball; when the ball is removed, the edges of the 'bowl' collapse inwards to create a soft triangular shape (an orthocenter is the intersection of three lines through a triangle). Orozco's preoccupation with the circular/spherical is in play here, embodying as it does his interest in 'natural motion', as well as his enthusiasm for the accidental. He embraces the lack of uniformity in the shape, colour and tonality of his objects – the inevitable product of the inconsistent firing process – and evidence of the ongoing potential of clay for this continually experimenting artist.
• Samantha Woods

Gabriel Orozco Born 1962, Jalapa, Verzcruz, Mexico. Lives and works in Mexico, Japan and France. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Gabriel Orozco', Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; 'Orozco Garden', South London Gallery, London; 2015 – 'Gabriel Orozco: Inner Cycles', Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; 2013 – 'Gabriel Orozco: Natural Motion', Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria, and touring to Moderna Museet, Sweden; 'Thinking in Circles', The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; 2012 – 'Gabriel Orozco: Asterisms', Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, and touring to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; 2009 – 'Gabriel Orozco', The Museum of Modern Art, New York and touring to Kunstmuseum Basel; Musée National d'art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London. Recent Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Natural Order of Things', Fundacion Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; 'Sculpture on the Move 1946–2016'. Kunstmuseum Basel; 2014 – 'Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and touring to Museo Jumex, Mexico City; 'Burning Down the House', The 10th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea; 2013 – 'NYC, 1993, Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star', New Museum, New York; 'Re:emerge – Towards a New Cultural Cartography', Sharjah Biennial 11, United Arab Emirates; 2012 – 11th Havana Biennial.

Gabriel Orozco



↑ *My Hands Are My Heart*, 1991
Silver dye bleach print
in two parts
Each: 23 × 34.5 cm
(9⅛ × 12⅛ in)

↗ *Torso*, 2006
Terracotta
32 × 48 × 60 cm
(12⅝ × 18⅞ × 23⅝ in)

↗↗ *Hand Pressing Five Balls into a Mass, After a Drawing*, 2002
Graphite on clay
8.9 × 16.5 × 13.3 cm
(3½ × 6½ × 5¼ in)

→ *Orthocenter* and *Orthocenter Views*, 2012
60 terracottas / 99 photographs
Installation view, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

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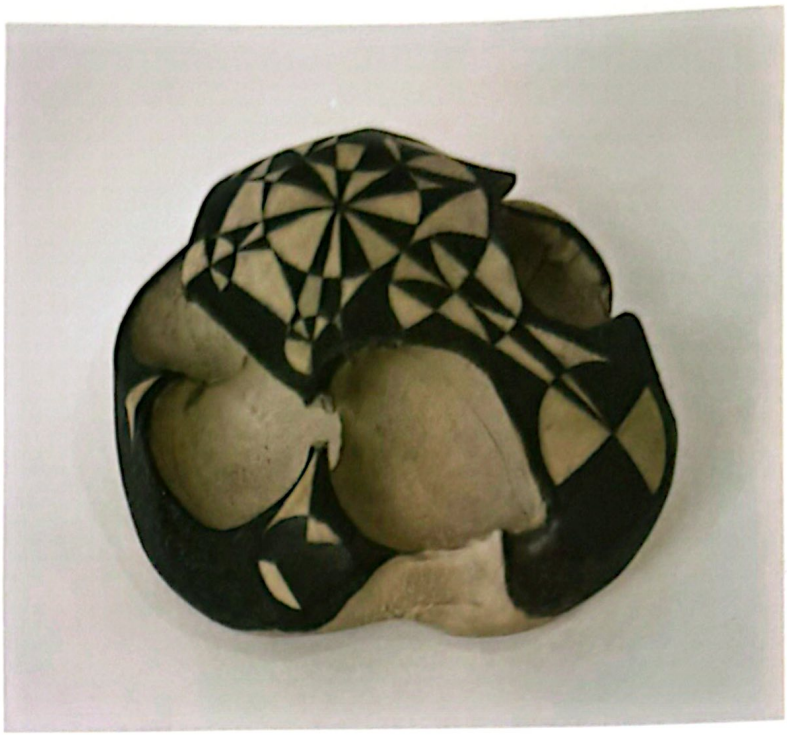



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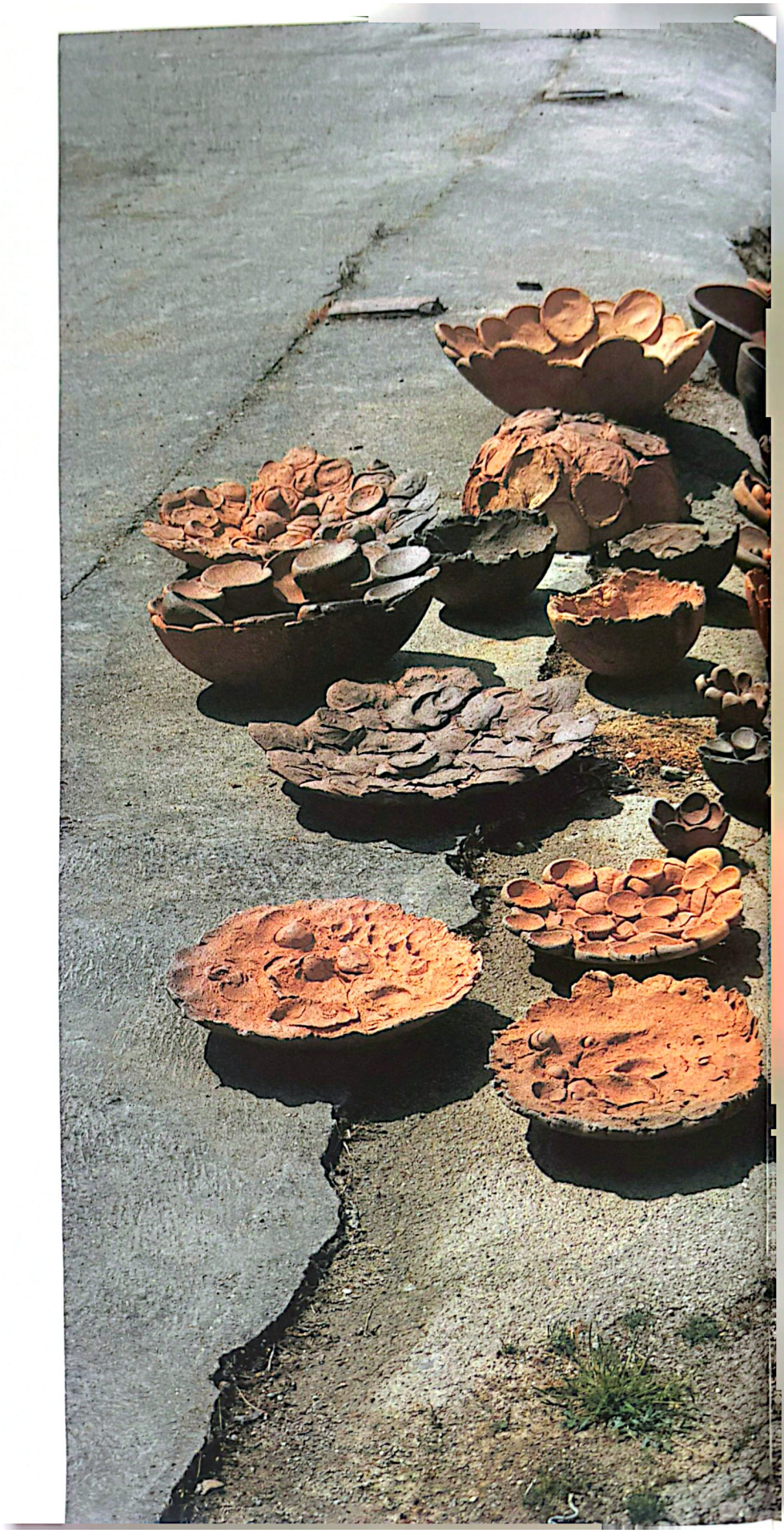
→ *Cazuelas (Beginnings)*, 2002
Fired clay
Variable dimensions



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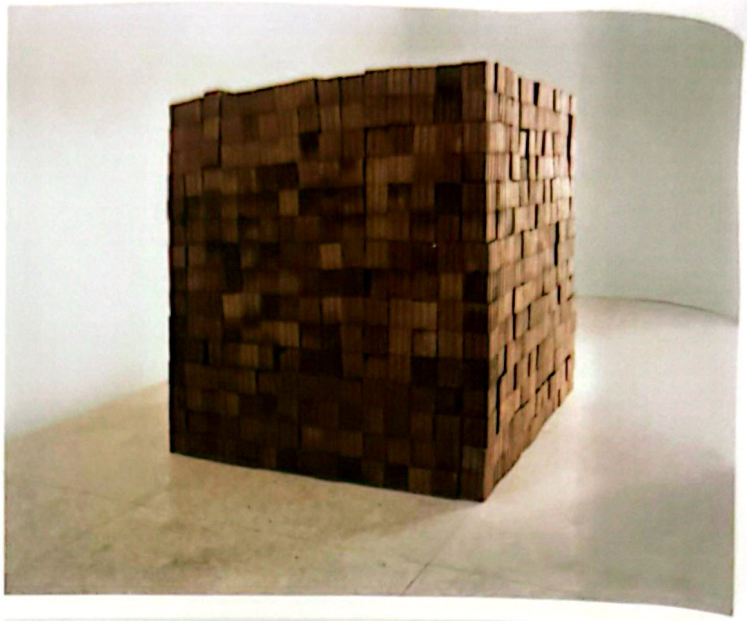
Damián Ortega is an artist whose work is all about doing. Interested in a world in flux, in the in-between and the continually evolving processes from which the world and everything in it is made, he makes objects which reach out to us in their materiality. Rather than relics or residues of activity carried out in the studio, they seem to be things which make themselves afresh in front of us.

Ortega has his suspicions about clay as a material for art, mistrusting its academic associations. He is better known for work using more industrial, urban materials and processes; he regularly uses bricks. In *Matéria/Energia (Sólido, Líquido e Gasoso)*, ('Matter/Energy (Solid, Liquid and Gas)' 2003) he arranged 1,700 bricks sequentially into a solid cube sitting inertly in the gallery; a single layer spreading, liquid-like, across the floor; and a suspended cloud of individual bricks. In *Key Terrain* (2007) he set lines of bricks tumbling like dominoes in nine films that restage the various conditions under which battles might be started, as identified in the ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu's 551 BC *The Art of War*.

Clay Mountain (2004) is an enormous pile of unworked clay made specifically to show the stored power of raw material. It is a thing as well as a representation of a thing: a mountain of clay made to look and behave like a mountain of clay. More recently, Ortega has begun modelling clay, revelling in its immediacy, enjoying it for what he describes as its innate generosity, and its ability to transform itself into a variety of different states. *Broken Sac* (2016), an eviscerated lump of clay that looks a little like a miniature *Clay Mountain*, is part of a body of ceramic work from 2016 called *States of Time*. The series also includes *Abrasive Objects*, an archaeologist's dream of unearthed (or perhaps re-earthed) tools; *Lava Waves*, a series of petrified, tabletop waves; *Eroded Valley*, a study of river erosion in five separate stages; and a series of miniature, highly decorative *Icebergs*. Collectively, these works attempt to explore Earth and human influence on it through the material of which much of the planet is made, and for which it is named.

Ortega's process in working with clay is essentially experimental, the making of one work influencing the making and appearance of the next, like waves breaking over one another in turn. Playing with the material's basic duality (liquid/solid, soft/hard), he uses a variety of tools (water and gravity as well as hand tools, both shop-bought and specially made) to give his works their form. His ceramic works allude both to geological time – the very slow, deep rhythm to which Earth moves – and to human time – the very tiny proportion of the Earth's existence in which humans have been active on it. All of life is here in this work. We are what we make, how we make it, and what we make it with. • Fiona Bradley







Damián Ortega Born 1967, Mexico City. Lives and works in Mexico City. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Damián Ortega', The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; 'El cohete y el abismo', Palacio de Cristal – Reina Sofia, Madrid; 2015 – 'Casino', HangarBicocca, Milan and touring to Malmö Konsthall, Sweden; 2014 – 'Cosmogonía Doméstica: Damián Ortega', Museo Jumex, Mexico City; 2013 – 'Damián Ortega: Apestraction', The Freud Museum, London; 2010 – 'Damián Ortega: The Independent', Barbican Curve Gallery, London; 2009 – 'Damián Ortega: Do it Yourself', Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; 2008 – 'Damián Ortega', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; 2007 – 'Being', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK; 2005 – 'Damián Ortega: The Beetle Trilogy and Other Works', Gallery at REDCAT, The roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; 'Untitled: Damián Ortega: the Uncertainty Principle', Tate Modern, London; 'Damián Ortega', Museu da Arte Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; 2004 – 'Damián Ortega', Kunsthalle Basel; 2002 – 'Cosmic Thing', Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2006 – '27th São Paulo Biennial', Brazil; 2003 – 'Made in Mexico', Insitute of Contemporary Art, Boston; 50th Venice Biennale.

Damián Ortega

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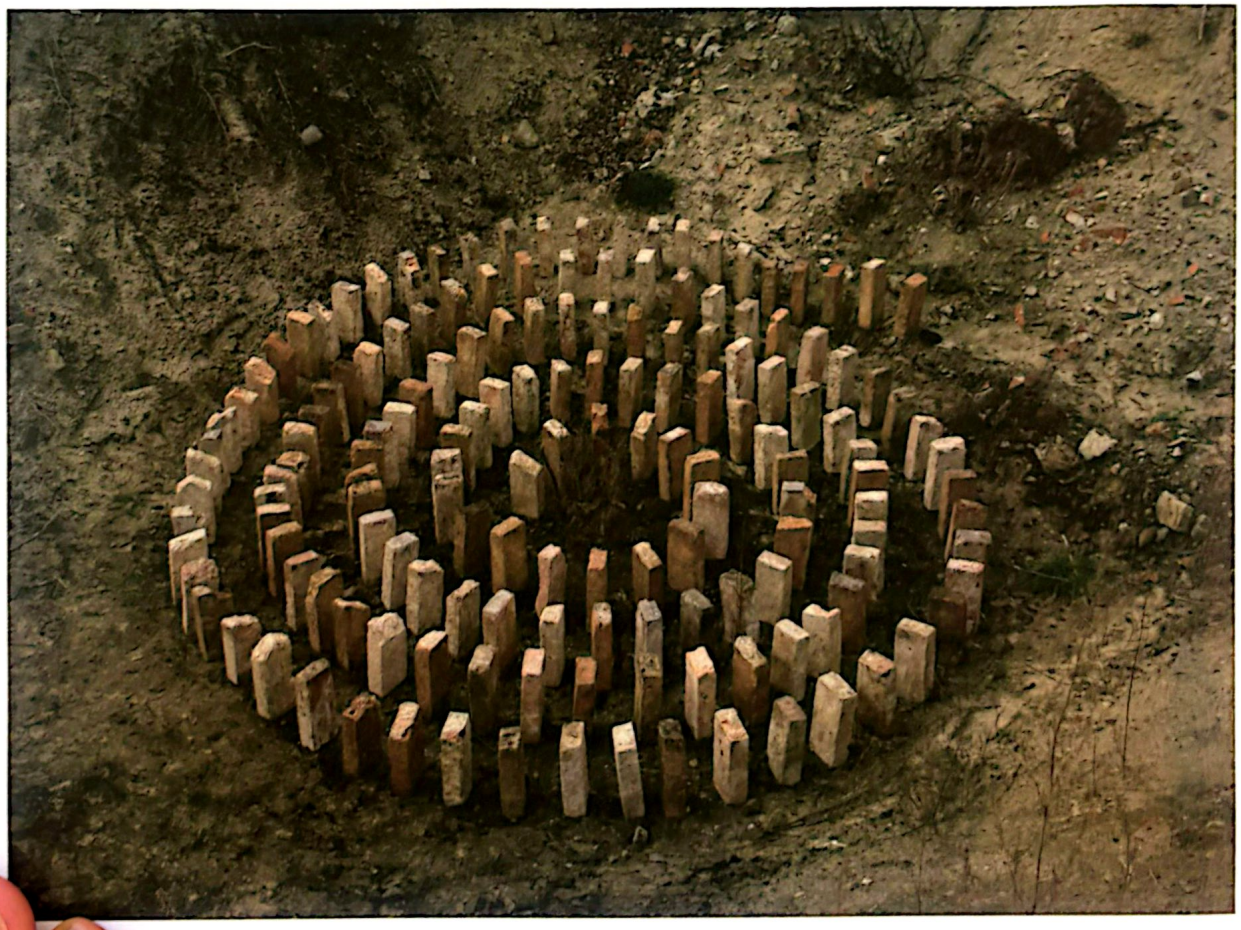
- *Matéria/Energia (Sólido, Líquido e Gasoso). ('Matter/Energy (Solid, Liquid and Gas)')*, 2003
  Bricks
  Variable dimensions

- Key Terrain, 2007
  Analogue chromatic handprint
  Diptych, each:
  77.6 × 92.6 × 4.5 cm
  (30 ⅝ × 36 ½ × 1¾ in)





-- Overleaf:
Broken Soc, 2016
Clay from Oaxaca, México
Variable dimensions
Installation view,
of Time' exhibitio
ket Gallery, F

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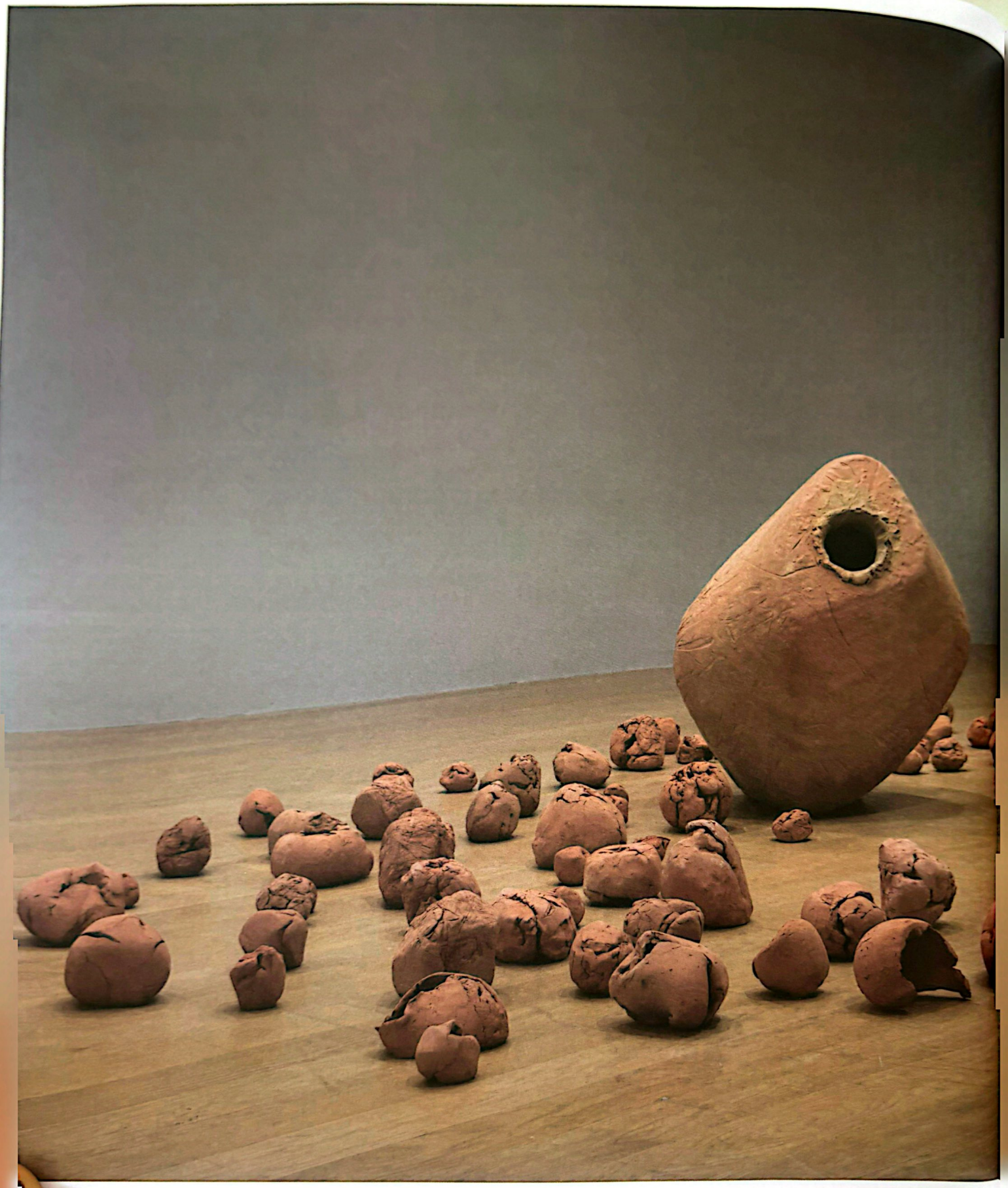

Ortega

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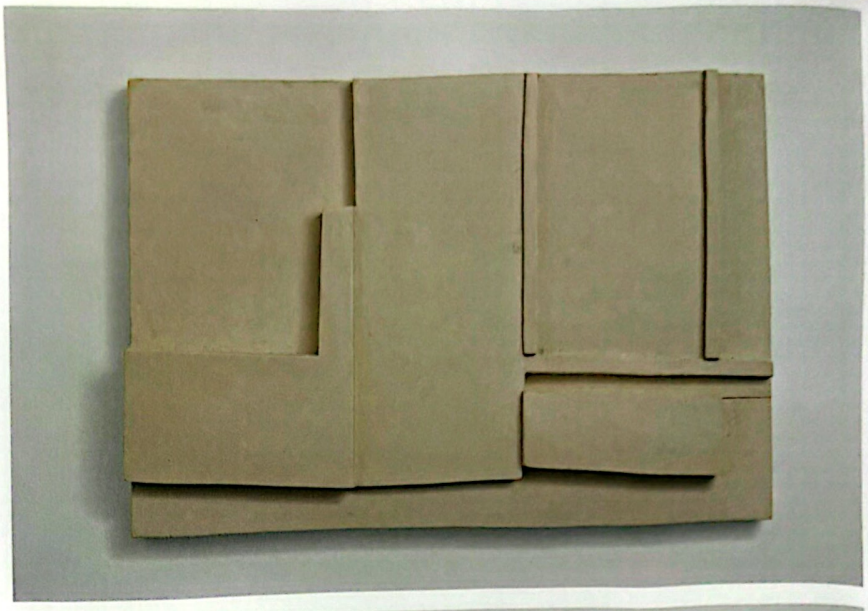
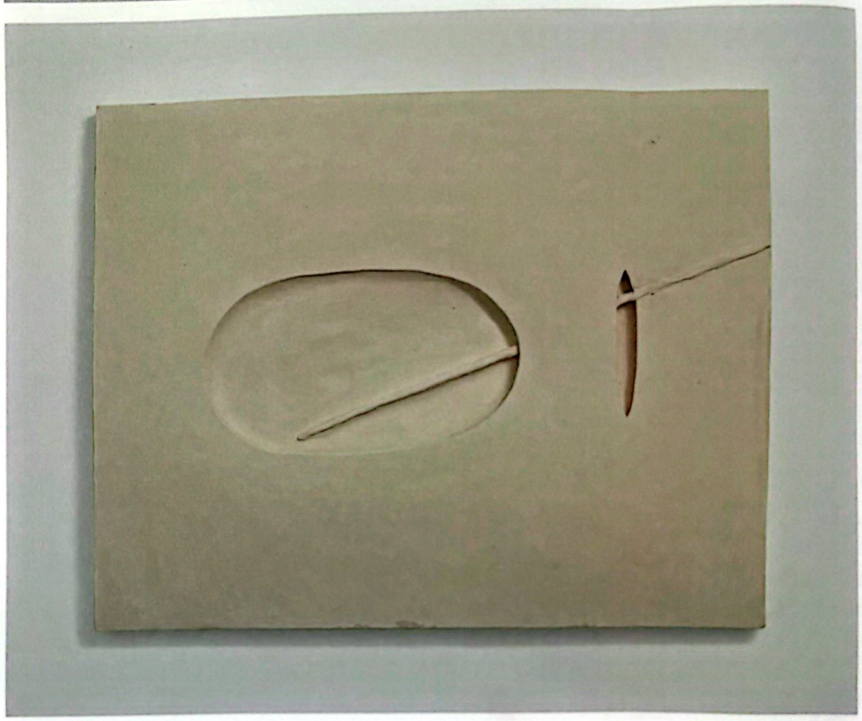
Anna-Bella Papp makes A4-size rectangular reliefs in pale unfired clay. Restrained in their raw materiality, simple form and modest scale, works such as *Untitled* (2011) and *Untitled* (2012) are more like models than sculptures. The way the artist displays them reinforces this: often laid flat, in orderly fashion, on transparent table tops, they seem never to have left her studio. The tension between finished and unfinished, made and in-the-making is at the heart of this work, which plays on all the natural strengths and vulnerabilities of Papp's chosen medium.

Clay easily lends itself to experimentation. Papp's delicate grey and beige slabs have the potential to be modelled and remodelled, sculpted or brought back to shapeless mass. The artist's efforts, all of her labour, can be wiped off with a simple gesture, like a sketch in a notebook. During the making process, Papp skilfully treads a fine line between perfecting her compositions and erasing them. Her reliefs seem to be in a permanent state of precariousness, undermining the classical definition of sculpture as solid and everlasting. When hung on the wall, these small tablets blur the boundaries between media and states even more. They can read as paintings or carefully drafted drawings – indeed, some have carefully drawn linear patterns on their surface.

Simple, geometrical forms trigger associations with modernist aesthetics. For her first solo show at the Nasher Sculpture Centre, Dallas in 2013, Papp prepared a series of works seemingly reminiscent of architectural models, evoking the style of the Bauhaus or functional Modernism. Read in that context, the carefully shaped but sometimes disarmingly imperfect slabs – with their occasionally uneven finish, visible water marks and slightly undulating surfaces – raised questions about the relationship between craft and industry, the serially produced and the handmade. Set side by side, striking in their repetitive nature, they invited reflection on productivity and the value of manual labour.

These ongoing considerations found fresh expression three years later in the artist's exhibition at De Ateliers in Amsterdam, for which she presented a new figurative body of work. Here, small reliefs featured earnest depictions of workers, partly evoking the monumentality of that despotic heir of modernist utopia, Social Realism. As much as looking at past art historical conventions, in these works Papp analyses the here and now. In the district where she lives in Brussels, the artist frequently encounters Romanian construction workers, immigrants providing cheap labour, living at the margins of the society. Granting them visibility, her fragile clay panels take on a pertinent sociopolitical dimension. In their modest physicality, they are a quiet yet firm comment on economic migration within Europe and beyond.
• Kasia Redzisz





†† *Untitled*, 2012
Clay
22.5 × 31.4 × 4 cm
(8⅞ × 12⅜ × 1⅝ in)

† *Untitled*, 2011
Clay
31 × 24.5 × 1.7 cm
(12¼ × 9⅝ × ⅝ in)

→ All *Untitled*, 2016, Clay. Left to right:
34 × 27.5 × 2.3 cm
(13⅜ × 10⅞ × ⅞ in)
33.2 × 27.2 × 3 cm
(13⅛ × 10¾ × 1⅛ in)
32.2 × 26.8 × 2.8 cm
(12⅝ × 10⅝ × 1⅛ in)
34.3 × 28.5 × 2.5 cm
(13½ × 11¼ × 1 in)

Anna-Bella Papp Born 1988, Chişineu-Criş, Romania. Lives and works Antwerp, Belgium. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'A better view/A better layout/A better shower /Softer bed/Not so far from noise/More like home', Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan; 2016 – 'In my heart there is a room designed by you', De Ateliers, Amsterdam; 2015 – Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London; 2014 – 'Sightings: Anna-Bella Papp', Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; 2013 – Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London; Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Theories of Modern Art', Stuart Shave/Modern Art; 2015 – 'I am attracted none the less....', Casey Kaplan, New York; 'Conversation Piece', Fondazione Memmo, Palazzo Ruspoli Stables, Rome; 2013 – 'Offspring 2013', De Ateliers, Amsterdam, Netherlands; 2012 – 'EU – 27 countries, 27 artists', Museum Tongerlohuys, Roosendaal, Netherlands; 'European Travellers – Art from Cluj Today', Kunsthalle Budapest, Hungary; 2011 – 'The May Salon', Galeria Plan-B, Cluj, Romania.

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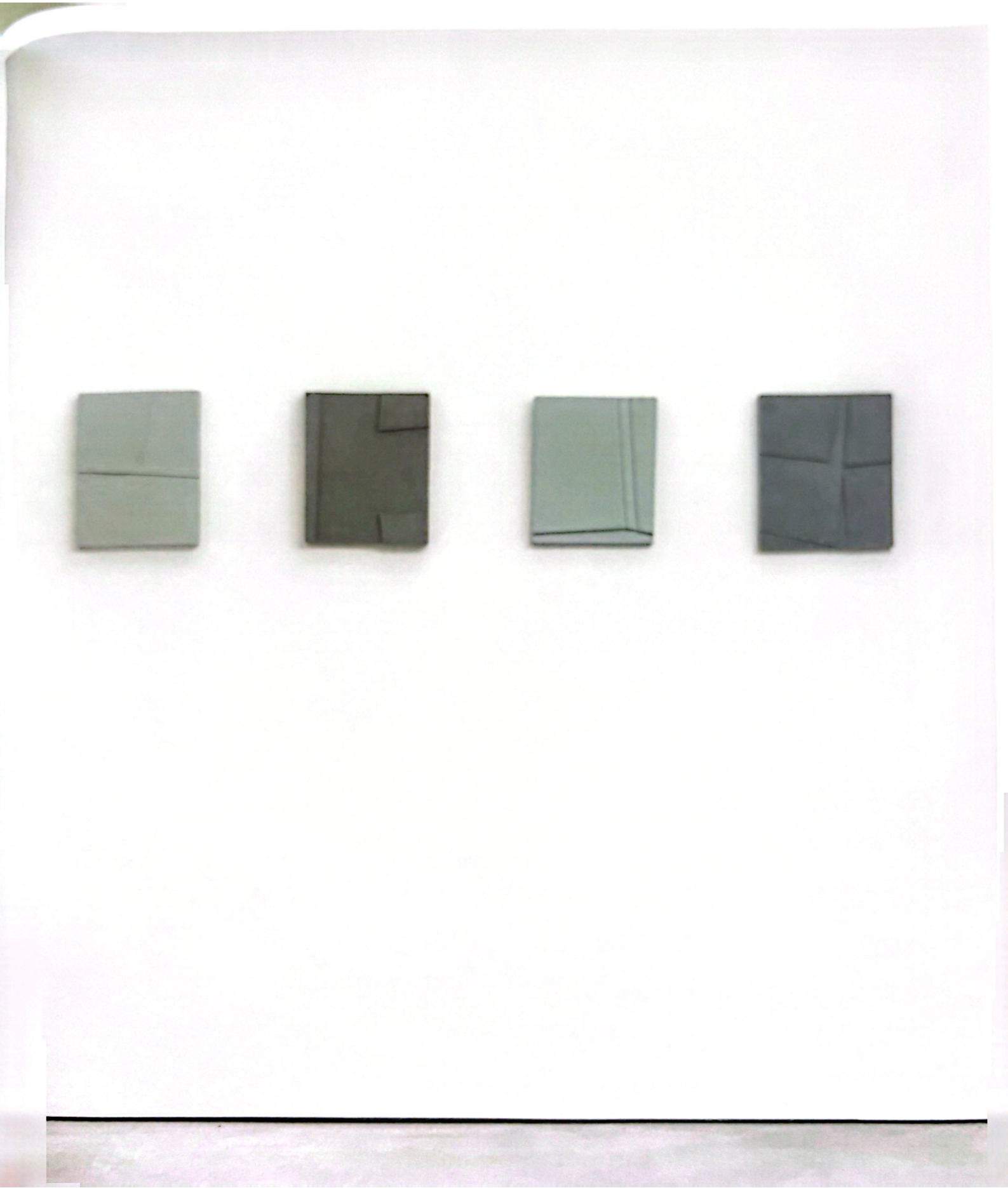

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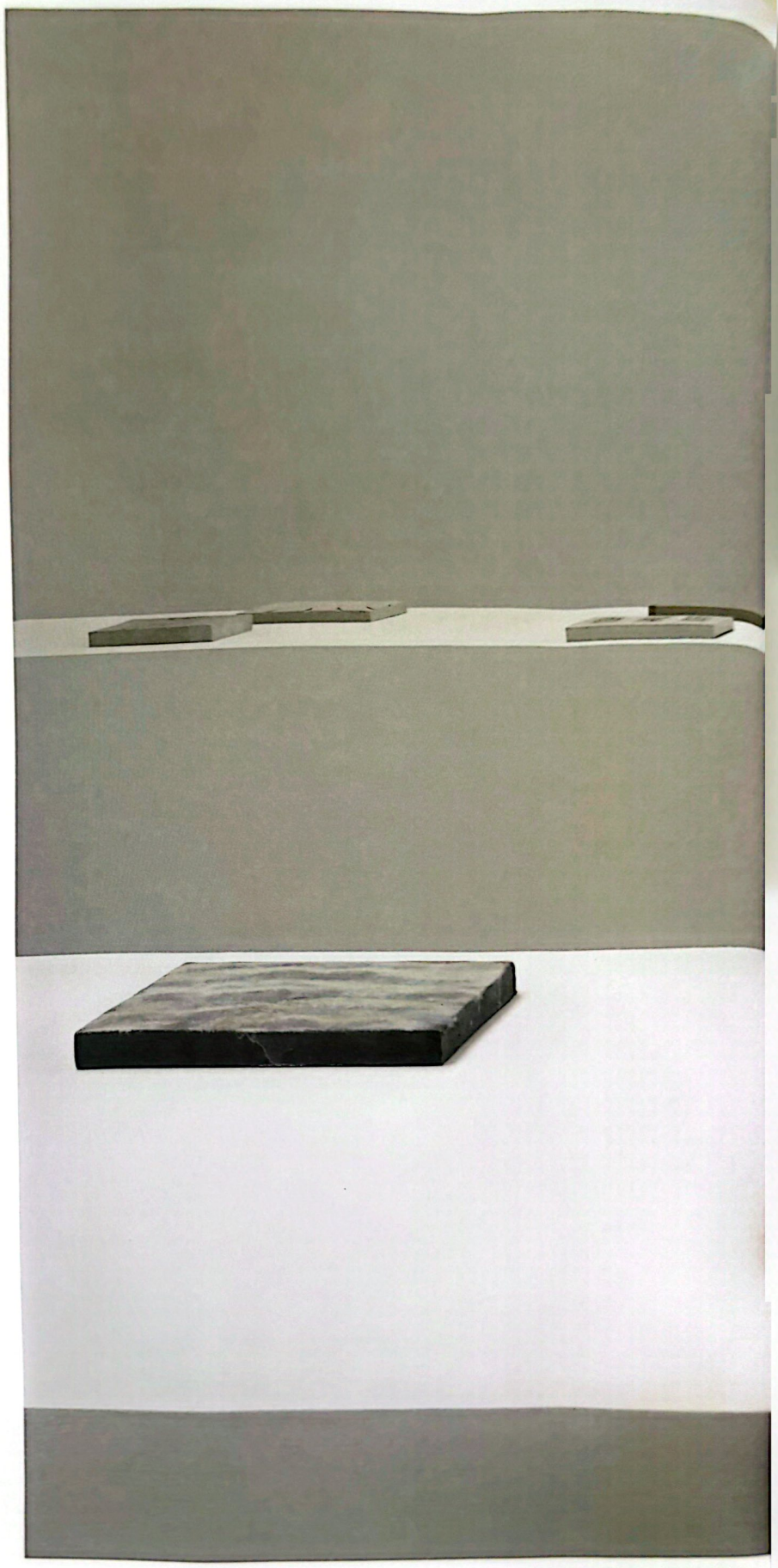
Installation view, 'Anna-Bella Papp', Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, 2015



-Bella Papp

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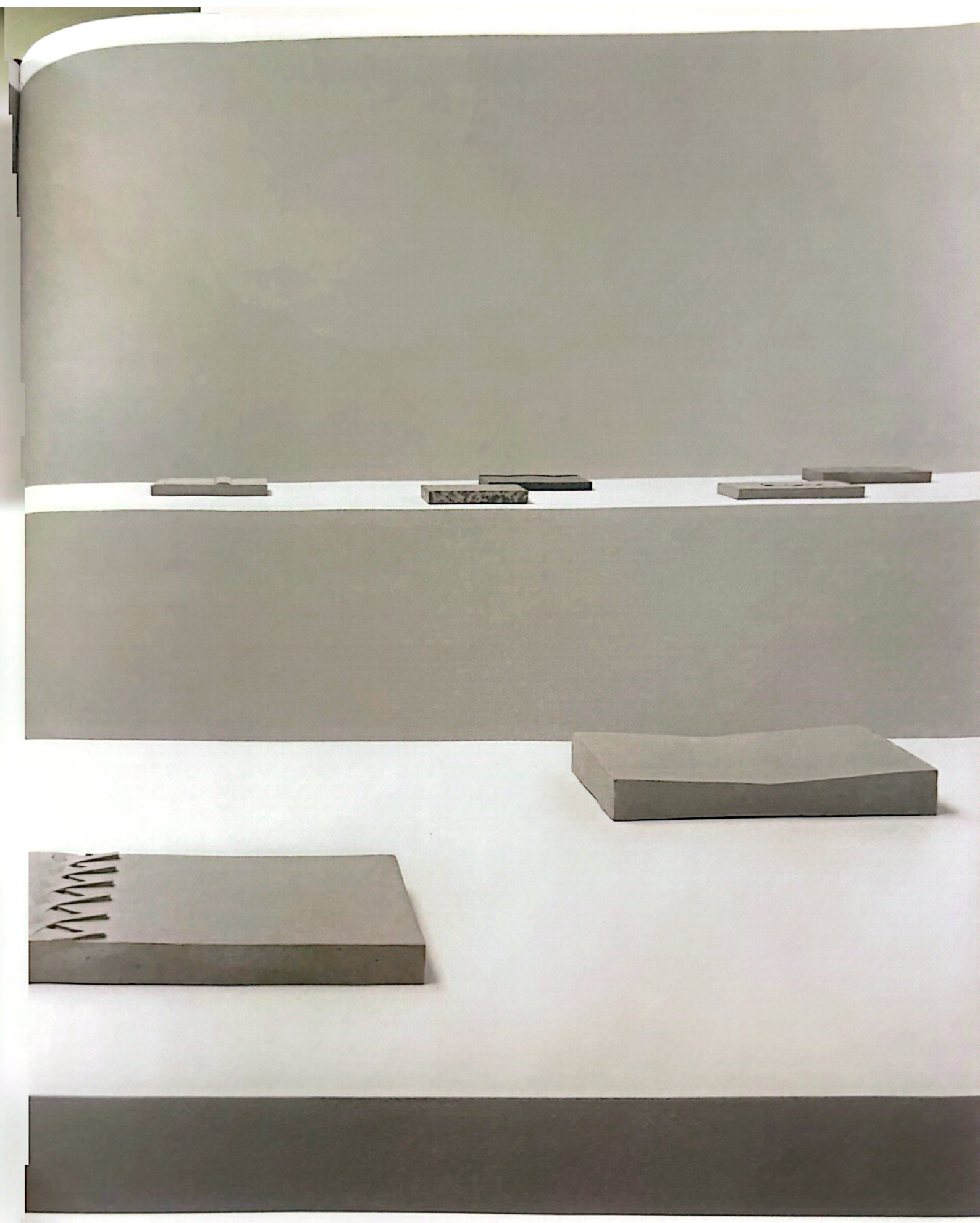

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'Brain, to hand, to object' goes the terse manifesto of the radical ceramicist and multimedia artist JJ PEET, who prefers to work under highly pressurized conditions where the formal realization of his artworks seeks impact rather than elegance. This unfussy, insurgent aesthetic sits at the heart of PEET's practice, from the elaborate, hacker-esque codes with which he titles his works – their offbeat spellings and capitalizations (including his name, which should always be written in capital letters) and frequent use of underscores stem from cyber-argot – to his use of ad-hoc materials and the occasional currents of violence that appear in his art. From this outsider position PEET explores contemporary society.

While he was trained in the technical specifics of how to sculpt and use clay, PEET gained attention early in his career for such new-media efforts as *TV Show* (2009), a series of four live quasi-news broadcasts that he piped into New York's On Stellar Rays gallery from a nearby undisclosed location called 'The Resistants'. This obliquely addressed the politics of the day through objects and performance. In a subsequent body of work, PEET carried this investigation of media into rough-hewn assemblage sculptures called *Stilifes* that combined ceramic cameras (which he terms 'capture devices') and found objects with photographs of global conflict, bringing sceptical attention to the constructed nature of the photojournalistic documents. Other sculptures tell obliquely of revolutionary conflicts, between figures including a resistance fighter and a luxury leader, through lumpen shapes and found detritus such as chocolate candy corn, socks or pilfered tokens from his antiques-dealer mother's basement. The *Luxury Leader War Kit* (2009), for instance, consists of a shelf holding a rudimentary cannon, a pile of grape cannonballs and a sock with a brick inside it.

More recently from approximately 2013, a series of objects that PEET calls 'PROXY_Cups' began to appear in his work, small functional clay vessels etched with runic Xs and other markings, which are intended as water or whisky containers from which to sip while considering whether to 'start a revolution'; he also makes 'DECOY_Cups', which have blades embedded in their bases, concealed in sculptural stands. He makes all of his pieces with great intensity, creating them in his windowless Brooklyn studio, four rooms each of which is dedicated to either sculpture, painting, drawing or multimedia. (He has been known to take this 'focalized' workspace on the road, building tiny studios near galleries to forge his exhibitions.)

'When I make these things, I'm not fucking around,' PEET has said of his work. 'I'm not making hippie pottery – it's serious.' To date, he has self-published half a dozen written guides deciphering the codes that connect his bodies of work, giving a narrative to his artistic struggle. A teacher of ceramics at Columbia University, PEET has also worked collaboratively with the artists Tom Sachs, Mary Frey and Pat McCarthy under the name Satan Ceramics. • Andrew Goldstein

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JJ PEET Born 1973, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Lives and works in Minneapolis and Brooklyn, New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Anthony Meier Fine Arts, San Francisco; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, California; 2016 – Arts Club of Chicago; Rosebud Gallery, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; 2015 – 'MAGiCSTANCE', On Stellar Rays, New York; 'BRAIN to HAND to OBJECT_', The Contemporary Austin; 2013 – 'Floating Heads and Time Collector', Redling Fine Arts, Los Angeles; 2012 – 'DEFEND_Station', On Stellar Rays, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'JJ PEET and Rob Rhee', Fort Worth Contemporary Arts – Moudy Gallery, The Art Galleries at TCU, Fort Worth, TX; 'Richard Shaw and JJ PEET', Harvey/Meadows Gallery, Aspen, CO; 2015 – 'Live in the layers...not on the litter', Ashley, Berlin; 'FIELD EFFECTS', Le Cap, Arles, France; 'Xenia', Poker Night, Seattle; 2014 – 'Satan Ceramics: Tom Sachs, JJ PEET, Mary Frey and Pat McCarthy', Salon 94 Freemans, New York, and touring to Ever Gold Gallery, San Francisco; 2013 – 'In Proximity, JJ PEET and Daniel Peet', Gallery Diet, Miami; 2011 – 'Prolonged Engagement', The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York.





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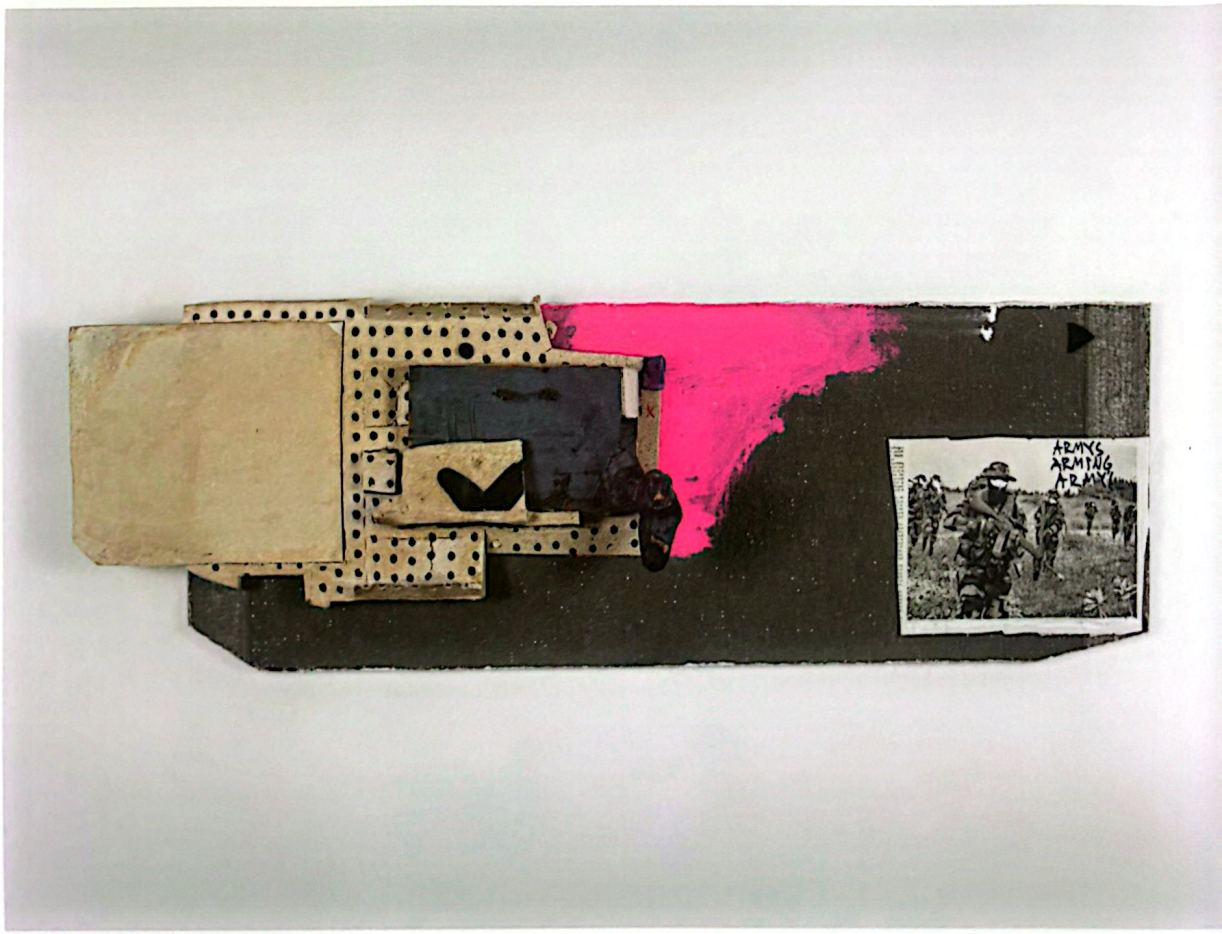
- *DECOY_Cup_7*, 2014
  Porcelain, porcelain blade, cardboard, granite
  25.4 × 22.9 × 17.8 cm
  (10 × 9 × 7 in)

- *DECOY_Cup_2*, 2013
  Stoneware, porcelain blade, cardboard, granite
  19.7 × 20.3 × 14 cm
  (8 ¼ × 8 × 6 ½ in)

- *Silencer Supressor*, 2015
  Porcelain, granite, aluminum, rubber, and paper and acrylic on panel
  40.6 × 77.5 × 16.5 cm
  (16 × 31 ½ × 7 ½ in)

- *Armies Arming Armies*, 2016
  Porcelain, newspaper, cement and acrylic
  29.8 × 101.6 × 10.2 cm
  (12 ¼ × 40 × 4 in)





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Raised in the village of Garessio in the Maritime Alps, Giuseppe Penone was shaped and defined by his formative years in this woodland setting. He left Garessio for art school in Turin in 1966, but rejected formal teaching after a year to focus his aesthetic enquiries on the close connection between man and nature. In 1967 he was identified by Germano Celant as one of the proponents of Arte Povera – a school of thought originating in Italy that rejected traditional artistic conventions and the vagaries of the commercial art world in favour of a more 'authentic' practice.

His use of clay has been consistent throughout his career, with a practice deriving from a preoccupation with the mark of skin on material as a metaphor for man's effect on the landscape. He embraces the properties of a material that can so distinctly bear the imprint of the artist, while also reflecting a more metaphysical interpretation: 'It is the form impressed onto the material by the fluid movement of the universe. In a simple handful of clay we have the synthesis of a universal form.'

Taking clay into his own hands, the title of his 'Avvolgere la terra' ('Gathering up Earth') series, (2014) describes his process – chunks of clay are squeezed into fist-sized shapes, displayed alongside other materials common to Penone's work, such as quartz, aluminium or bronze. Similar terracotta sculptures, retaining the impression of the artist's touch (his face or hands), appear within a forest of bronze trees in the series 'Terra su terra' ('Earth on earth', 2014–16) – a direct representation of man's relationship with the natural world. Penone turned to clay to express another close relationship, this time a personal one, in 'Corteccia' (1986), a series of terracotta portraits which draw to mind an antique portrait bust, but in fact represent his daughter, Caterina, each painted with an enamel glaze that draws attention to the hand of the artist on the surface.

Just as touch is a way of knowing our world, so breath is the essence of being alive in the world: 'Breath is automatic, involuntary sculpture. That brings us closer to osmosis with things.' Penone expressed this sculpturally in 'Soffio' ('Breath'), a series of standing sculptures made in the kilns of Castellamonte near Turin in 1978. Penone made a cast of his body around which he stacked layers of clay, before removing the cast to leave its impression, materialising in clay the suggestion of the artist's body though the volume of his breath. To further highlight the closeness of man and material, a cast of the inside of the artist's mouth forms the mouth of these vessels.

A material made from the earth, the appeal of clay to an artist whose interest in the natural world is fundamental to his practice is powerful and productive; it has continued to find its place in Penone's work, in ways that are both subtle and more emphatic, for over fifty years. • Samantha Woods

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Giuseppe Penone Born 1947, Garessio, Italy. Lives and works in Turin, Italy, and Paris. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2013 – 'Penone Versailles', Château de Versailles, France; 2007 – 'Giuseppe Penone. Sculture di linfa', 52nd Venice Biennale; 2004 – 'Penone. Rétrospective', Centre Pompidou, and touring to CaixaForum, Fundación 'la Caixa', Barcelona; 1991 – 'Giuseppe Penone', Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy; 1980 – 'Giuseppe Penone', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1977 – 'Giuseppe Penone', Bäume Augen Haare Wände Tongefäss, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2012 –'dOCUMENTA (13)', Karlsaue Park and Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany, and Queen's Palace, Bagh-e Bagur Pavilion, Kabul, Afghanistan; 1994 – 'The Italian Metamorphosis 1943–1968', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; 1987 – 'documenta 8', Fridericianum; 1972 – 'documenta 5. Befragung der Realität. Bildwelten heute', Neue Galerie Schöne Aussicht, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany; 1970 – 'Information', The Museum of Modern Art, New York; 1969 –'Konzeption/Conception. Dokumentation einer heutiger Kunstrichtung', Städtisches Museum Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany.

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ppe Penone





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- *Avvolgere la terra*, 2014
  Aluminium, terracotta
  41 × 57 × 7.5 cm
  (16 ⅛ × 22 ⅜ × 2 ¾ in)

- *Avvolgere la terra – Rising Earth*, 2014
  Bronze, terracotta
  80 × 130 × 60 cm
  (31 ½ × 51 ⅛ × 23 ⅝ in)
  Pedestal: 142 × 87 × 72 cm
  (55 ⅞ × 34 ¼ × 28 ⅜ in)

- *Terra su terra – volto*, ('Earth on earth – face'), 2014
  Bronze, terracotta
  224 × 75 × 50 cm
  (88 ⅛ × 29 ½ × 19 ⅝ in)



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→ *Equivalenze – 12 aprile 2016*, 2016
Metal, acid, terracotta
88 × 140 × 20 cm
(34 ¼ × 55 ⅛ × 7 ⅞ in)



pe Penone

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The interdisciplinary work of Mai-Thu Perret hails from a singular starting point – her engagement with literature. Shortly after completing her BA in English Literature at Cambridge University in 1997, Perret began a career in writing and curating, which ultimately led her to make artworks. Inspired by the active squat culture and autonomous communities in her hometown Geneva, Switzerland, as well as her reverence for modernist movements including Dada, Constructivism and the Bauhaus, Perret conceived a format for generating cross-platform artworks to reflect her manifold interests.

In 1999 she began a project called *The Crystal Frontier*, writing diary entries and letters in the names of fictional characters from an all-female commune called New Ponderosa Year Zero, located in the desert of New Mexico. Perret's 'girls' chose to reject capitalism and embrace an anti-patriarchal and Utopian form of living far away from city life. There, in the safety of their isolated commune, they were able to assert their individuality, making affirmations of identity through various craft-based artworks spanning textiles, paintings and ceramic sculptures. Over time, Perret's various personas provided the opportunity for experimenting with Pop, modernist, and expressionistic aesthetics ranging from ceramic *trompe l'oeil* animal rawhides to strictly formal compositions of ceramic triangles.

Developing intersecting narratives between fiction and reality, Perret has channelled themes of mysticism, revolutionary thought, the politics of feminism, domesticity and labour in her work. She also frequently integrates direct reference to historical figures from art and literature. For example, her sculpture *Autoprogettazione I* (2011) is a kiln-fired concrete copy of one of Enzo Mari's infamous wooden tables, featured in his 1974 DIY book of home furniture designs which revolutionized the industry, providing simple furniture making guides for the masses.

More recently, Perret distanced herself from *The Crystal Frontier* project in order to expand her narrative repertoire. Works such as *Les guérillères X* (2016) – a life-size ceramic mannequin of a contemporary female soldier donning army fatigues and a resin assault rifle – is inspired by French avant-garde writer and feminist theorist Monique Wittig, whose eponymous 1969 novel describes a battle of the sexes waged by a militant lesbian tribe who subvert the language of difference and take over the world. In these later ceramic works, having formerly toyed with the historical exclusion of women in the arts, the tension between fine art and craft, emotive expression and identity politics, Perret's figures have now taken an even more assertive stance. Her warrior women have finally emerged, wholeheartedly claiming their place on the front line. • Arielle Bier

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Mai-Thu Perret Born 1976, Geneva. Lives and works in Geneva. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Sightings: Mai-Thu Perret', Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; 'Zone', Simon Lee Gallery, London; 2014 – 'Astral Plane', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2013 – 'The Prairie', Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich; 2012 – 'The Adding Machine', Le Magasin, Grenoble, France; 2011 – 'Mai-Thu Perret: I dream of the code of the west', Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich; 'Love Letters in Ancient Brick', Theatre de l'Usine, Geneva and touring to Swiss Institute of Contemporary Art, New York; 2010 – 'An Ideal for Living', University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection', Rubell Family Collection, Miami; 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris, and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 'Work Hard', Swiss Institute of Contemporary Art, New York; 2014 – 'Decorum', Musée D'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; 2013 – 'Pattern: Follow the Rules', Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan and touring to Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, Colorado; 2012 – 'Anti-Establishment', CCS Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; 2011 – 'ILLUMInations', 54th Venice Biennale; 2010 – 'Abstract Possible', Malmö Konsthall, Sweden.





hu Perret

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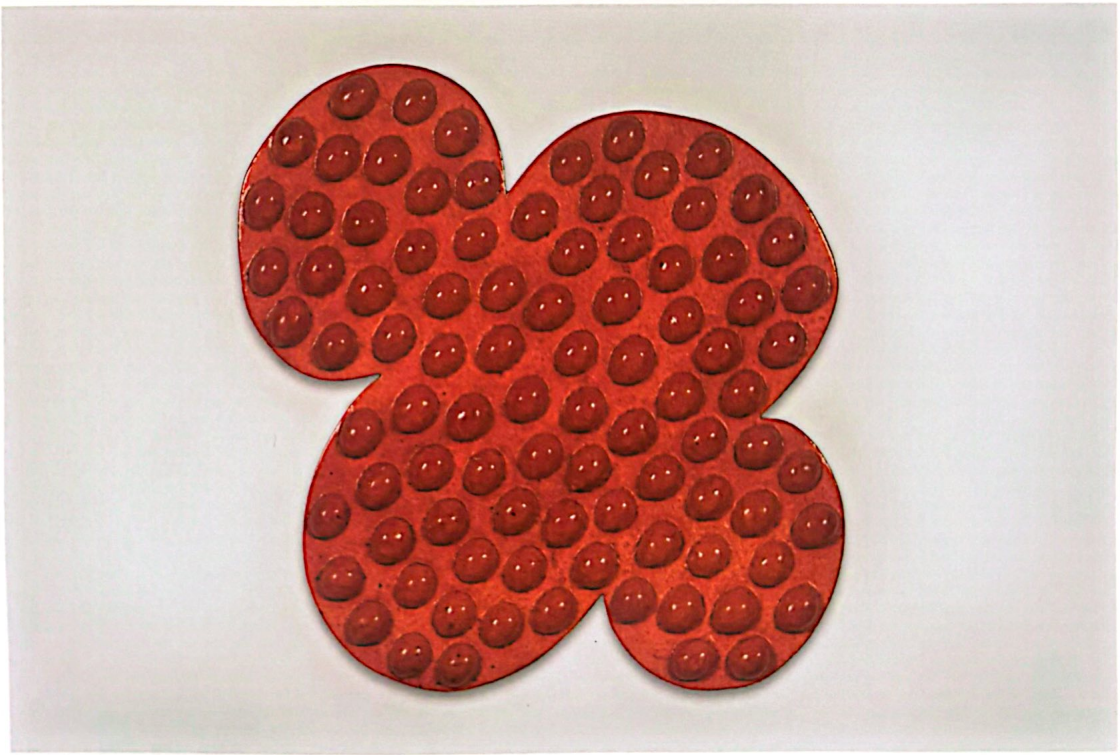
Les guérillères X, 2016
Glazed ceramic, steel, epoxy, synthetic hair, cotton and polyester fabric, polyester resin, and steel base
166.4 × 81.3 × 64.8 cm
(65 ⅝ × 32 × 25 ½ in)

Autoprogettazione I, 2011
Refractory concrete, glaze
72.4 × 199.4 × 80 cm
(28 ½ × 78 ½ × 31 ½ in)

If you do not throw yourself into the breakers, how will you ever meet the one who frolics in the waves? 2014
Glazed ceramic
50.8 × 43.2 × 10.2 cm
(20 × 17 × 4 in)

The rat that crawled in the money tube is at its wit's end, 2015
Glazed ceramic
68 × 73 × 6.5 cm
(26 ¾ × 28 ¾ × 2 ½ in)





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British artist Grayson Perry has described his multi-faceted practice as a 'car crash of influences'. His ceramic works – encompassing pots, vases, urns and plates – have drawn variously on the great ceramic traditions of China, Japan and the Middle East, as well as those of his native country. Part autobiography, part social commentary, they riotously combine biting satire with lavish surface decoration and imagery.

A graduate of Portsmouth Polytechnic, Perry did not study ceramics as an art student in the late 1970s. Instead, he fell into the medium several years later as a young, unemployed artist, encouraged by a friend to take up pottery night classes. Perry recalls that pottery was a deeply unfashionable medium in London art circles at this time, something that encouraged his embrace of the medium; moreover, clay was inexpensive and easily accessed.

While also employing other media, Perry remains best known for his ceramics, which have evolved over three decades from relatively simple objects to sophisticated ones featuring open-source and photographic transfers, incising or sgraffito, sprig-moulding and gilding. Initially, Perry described himself as a conceptual artist posing as a craftsman. He has since rethought this position, undertaking extensive research on the history of world ceramics, honing his skills and placing equal emphasis on concept and technique.

Perry's ceramic plates and vases are typically (though not exclusively) modest in scale. There is also a humility to the works, with their inexpensive fabrication and domestic, utilitarian associations. 'Beauty' is a word that recurs in Perry's vocabulary, along with a love of ornament and excess – attributes that rub up against the works' irreverent humour, social satire and frequent, explicit sexuality (*Object in Foreground*, 2016, is shaped as a giant phallus). Individual pieces touch on his personal life and family history, along with reflections on taste and class. Gender, sexuality, sadomasochism and transvestism are also key features. A transvestite himself, Perry has described his female persona Claire as a 'central plank' of his creativity. Equally significant is his childhood teddy bear, Alan Measles, who appears in artworks such as *The Near Death and Enlightenment of Alan Measles* (2011) as a heroic, male role model.

Sexual provocation formed a recurring theme in Perry's early pots, later replaced by a broader, more nuanced critique of social values and politics. For example, *Modern Family* (2014) depicts the family unit as a homosexual couple and their child. Delivering the BBC Reith Lectures in 2013, Perry noted that the job of the artist is to notice things other people might not see. The truths revealed by his artistic 'stealth bombs' are painful, funny and profoundly insightful all at once. • Rachel Kent

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Grayson Perry Born 1960, Chelmsford, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Grayson Perry: The Most Popular Art Exhibition Ever!', Serpentine Galleries, London; 2016 – 'Hold Your Beliefs Lightly', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Denmark; 2015 – 'My Pretty Little Art Career', Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney; 'Provincial Punk', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; 'Small Differences', Pera Museum, Istanbul; 2014 – 'Who are You?', National Portrait Gallery, London; 2011 – 'Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman', The British Museum, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 'Summer Exhibition 2015', The Royal Academy of Arts, London; 'Under the skin', Textiel Museum, Tilburg, Netherlands; 2014 – 'DECORUM – Carpets and Tapestries by Artists', Power Station of Art, Shanghai; 2013 – 'Hangzhou Triennial of Fabric Art', Hangzhou Art Museum, China; 'Painting and Philosophy', Fondation Maeght, Saint Paul de Vence, France.

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rayson Perry





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- *The Rosetta Vase*, 2011
  Glazed ceramic
  78.5 cm × 40.7 cm
  (30 ⅞ in × 16 ⅛ in)

- *Shadow Boxing*, 2016
  Glazed ceramic
  Assembled height:
  95 cm (37 ⅜ in)
  Vase: 68 × 38 cm
  (26 ¾ × 14 in)
  Lid: 32 × 25 cm
  (12 ⅝ × 9 ⅞ in)

- *Object in Foreground*, 2016
  Glazed ceramic
  68 × 38 cm
  (26 ¾ × 14 in)





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Tal R – born Tal Rosenzweig – describes himself as a late bloomer. Though he drew constantly as a child, his road to becoming an artist was rather winding, with travels to Asia and time spent working in the diamond industry interrupting his linear path through art school. Born in Tel Aviv (though now based in Copenhagen) to a Czechoslovakian father and a Danish mother, Tal grew up with a dual-mindedness that holds great influence on his artistic practice. Each new body of work seems to take on a different identity, with the artist responding to a new idea by adopting an entirely new medium.

Working in drawing, painting and collage as his primary modes of expression, but also delving into sculpture, ceramics and installation in recent years, Tal is a great collector of images, impressions, histories and experiences. He carries around a suitcase of materials – paper, fragments for collage, etc. – so that he can always be prepared to respond visually to the world around him. He draws frequently from life, stopping interesting strangers to ask if he can sketch them, and quickly rendering their image in an unedited instance. His works are expressive, yet almost naive, their simplicity aiming more to evoke the feeling of a moment than to directly represent it.

While his paintings are colourful, graphic and redolent of art historical predecessors – the Fauves and Post-Impressionists are obvious influences – his ceramic sculptures are often much more subdued. Finished in a Raku kiln, a centuries-old Japanese ceramic technique, the final appearance of Tal's 'Scholars Palace' (2015) series is somewhat beyond his control, the kiln transforming the works in unpredictable ways, fire and smoke leaving their indelible marks. Slightly earlier works that are similarly titled – *Scholars* (2012) – sees the modelling of modulated, monochrome grey forms; we can imagine the touch of the artist as he fingers rolled sausages of clay into abstractions, some like the bloated wings of a butterfly, others just claiming their own unique, playful, indescribable shape while supported by the rod of a circular stand.

Tal's ceramic works are rough, grainy and imprecise. Some are rather creature-like, with limbs wrapped in complex spools and formations. Others take on the shape of a stele, stool or phallus, an upright, roughly hewn clay lightning rod. In *Leg Penis* (2010–13), an elongated, textured rod in tones of lemon yellow and murky brown is interrupted by a scarlet red protrusion, while *Foot* (2010–13) sees a cartoonish form graded with colours of bubble-gum pink and a yellow more akin to a canary. These ceramic sculptures show the balance (or lack thereof) between intention and chance, effort and accident, but are inevitably underpinned with a sense of humour and play, as our eyes try to the place the forms, never quite being able to settle on one thing another. • Jens Hoffmann

al R Born 1967, Tel Aviv, Israel. Lives and works in Copenhagen. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Academy', Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; 2016 – 'Flamingo Flametti', Institut für Modern Künst, Nürnberg, Germany; 2013 – 'The Virgin', ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark; 'Schneiderbrett Tee Pavillion', Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; 'Sail Away', Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany; 2012 – 'Zig versus Zag', Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; 'Mann über Bord', Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck, Austria, and touring to Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; 2011 – 'Mann auf Schlaf', Kunstverein Ausberg – Holbeinhaus, Germany; 'The Elephant behind the Clown', Der Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Summer Exhibition 2016', Royal Academy of Arts, London; 'Viehof Collection: International Contemporary Art', Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany; 'Illumination: New Contemporary Art at Louisiana', Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; 2015 – 'Random Sampling: Paintings from Sammlung Goetz', Haus der Kunst, Munich; 'Avatar & Atavism', Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; 'Fire & Forget. On Violence', KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; 'Paperworlds', Buchheim Museum, Munich; 2013 – 'Either/Or', Haus am Waldsee, Berlin, and touring to Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen; 2012 – 'Tal R, Meese and Richter', Holstebro Kunstmuseum, Holstebro, Denmark; 2011 – 'Woodcuts – From Dürer to Tal R', SMK Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark.



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+ *Leg Penis*, 2010–13
Glazed ceramic
Work: 83 × 29 × 8 cm
(32¾ × 11½ × 3⅛ in)
Artist plinth: 28 × 15 × 15 cm
(11 × 5 × 5 in)

† *Scholars*, 2012
Raku fired ceramic
62 × 60 × 35 cm
(24⅜ × 23⅝ ×

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↖ *Face*, 2010–13
Glazed ceramic
Work: 32 × 17 × 10 cm
(12⅝ × 6¾ × 4 in)
Artist plinth: 26 × 23 × 23 cm
(10¼ × 9 × 9 in)

↑ *Foot*, 2010–13
Glazed ceramic
Work: 32 × 24 × 10 cm
(12⅝ × 9½ × 4 in)
Artist plinth: 25 × 22 × 31 cm
(9¾ × 8¾ × 12¼ in)

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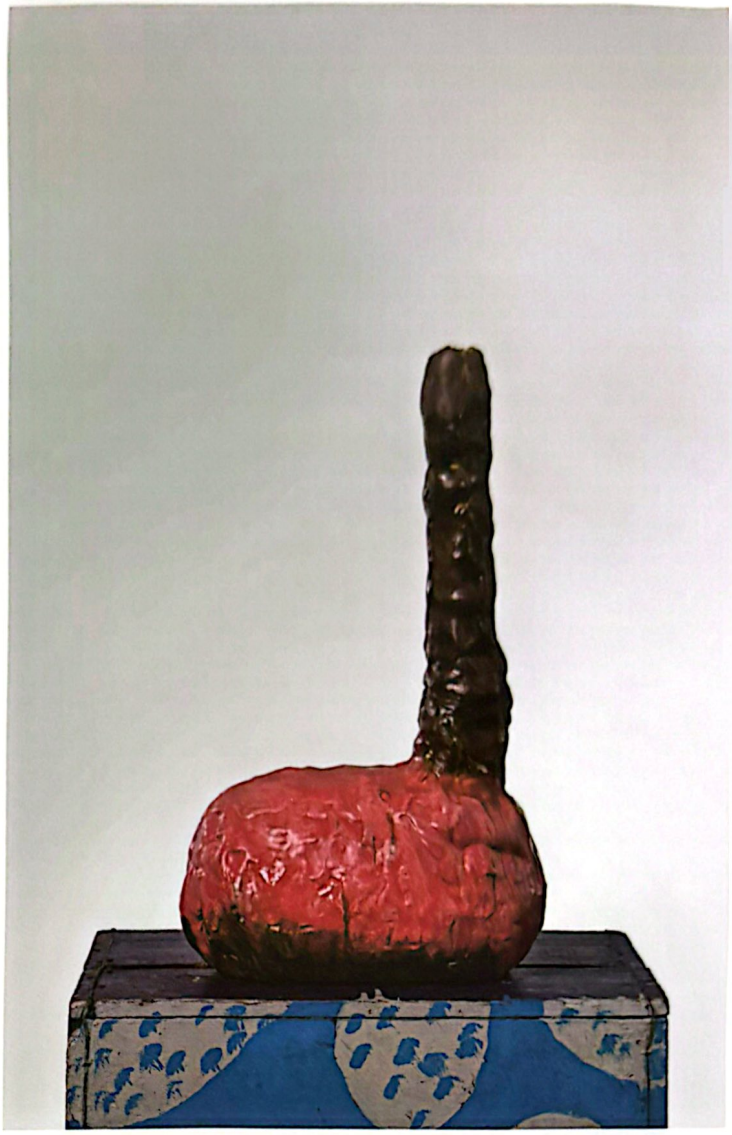

↖ *Head*, 2010–13
Glazed ceramic
Work: 48 × 22 × 16 cm
18 7/8 × 8 11/16 × 6 5/16 in
Artist plinth: 22 × 18 × 18 cm
8 11/16 × 7 11/16 × 7 1/16 in

↑ *Foot*, 2010–13
Glazed ceramic
Work: 45 × 30 × 18 cm
17 ¾ × 11 13/16 × 11 13/16 in
Artist plinth: 25 × 48 × 31 cm
9 13/16 × 18 7/8 × 12 1/16 in

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Indian artist Sahej Rahal's practice is invested in what could be described as 'worlding' – creating totemic sculptures, fictional assemblages and ritualistic performances that build strange yet compelling parallel universes to our own reality. Working through film, performance and sculpture, his practice draws on sources as disparate as mythology, Japanese anime, science fiction, cinema, paganism and the intoxicating tumult of his home city Mumbai. The latter's kaleidoscopic clash of old and new architectures is influential on his own assemblages, which use a range of media, to synthesize new creatures, architectural forms and uncanny objects.

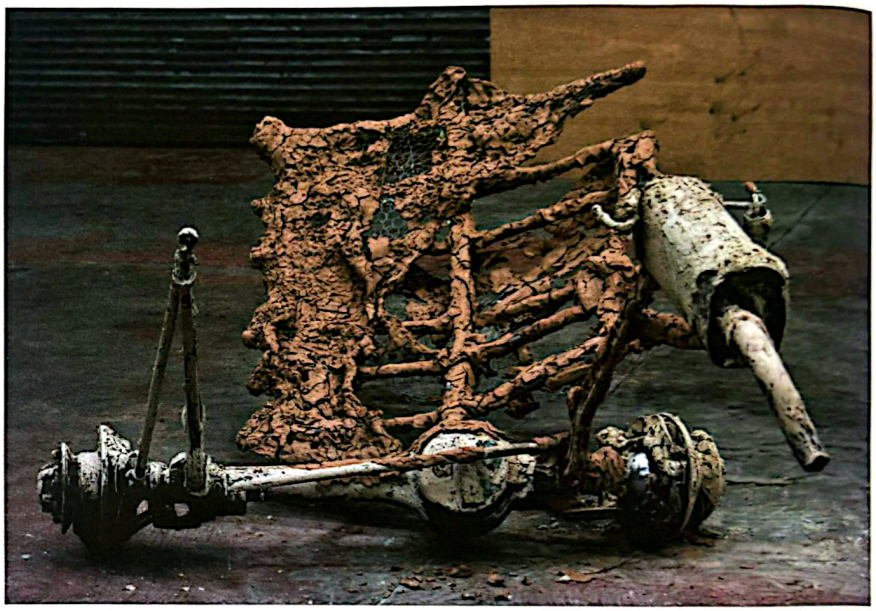
In his film *FORERUNNER* (2013) Rahal brought together fiction with film and performance to create an unworldly clash of ancient and futuristic, not without a touch of humour. A voice-over quotes from Jorge Luis Borges's *On Exactitude in Science* in which an absurd 1:1 map of an empire is made. On the screen, a swathed figure dexterously wields a fluorescent tube light; it cuts through the basement gloom of a collapsed building much like a lightsaber.

From 2014, his works have increasingly used unfired clay to create the tools, detritus and structures that populate his imagined and strange worlds. *HARBINGER* (2014), made for the Kochi Biennale in Kerala, India, skewed the architecture of the exhibition venue, ghosting existing structural features and recalling both an alien form and Soviet-era war memorials (Kochi, a city in the region of Kerala, has a long-standing history with Communism). Rahal caked clay and straw over a supporting armature for his sculpture, thus bringing to this muscular intervention a sense of its own material frailty, the clay cracking and decaying as it dried.

Recent works for the Liverpool Biennial, *UNDERGOD* (2016) and *SARAS* (2012), saw Rahal place clay objects and forms on standard office furniture, part of a bathetic archaeology built up over multiple venues. In one, a video monitor played a film featuring a clay-clad figure breathing almost imperceptibly – a powerful evocation of a dormant god, encased but still living. The sculptures littering the desks seemed to be primeval, perhaps forged by long-dead, unknown bureaucratic workers, or tooled by timeless beings, enslaved to their labour. Their forms cracked and disintegrated as they dried, creating a temporality within the work, a poetic echo of the precarious nature of civilizations.

Rahal's work is generous to the viewer, allowing us space to build narratives from the fragments on offer, each of us involved in writing our own version of history. Seen through the prisms of science-fiction, myth and literature, this human engagement is central to the embedded histories at which his objects hint. • Natasha Hoare





↑ *UNDERGOD*, 2016
Found object armatures and unfired clay
Variable dimensions
Installation views, 'Liverpool Biennial', UK

↗ *HARBINGER*, 2014
Found object armatures and unfired clay
Variable dimensions
Installation views, 'Whorled Explorations' exhibition, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India

Sahej Rahal Born 1988, Mumbai, India. Lives and works in Mumbai. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Adversary', Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai, India; 2013 – 'Forerunner', Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai, India; ; 2011 – 'Hard Boiled Wonderland', Kunst(Zeug)Haus Museum, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Liverpool Biennial', Liverpool, UK; 'Frozen World of the Familiar Stranger', Kadist SF, San Francisco; 'Temporal Turn', Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas; 'The Missing One, Dhaka Art Summit', Bangladesh, India; 'Setouchi Triennial', Shodoshima Island, Japan; 2015 – 'Sights and Sounds', Jewish Museum, New York; 2014 – 'Whorled Explorations', Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India; 'Vancouver Biennale', Canada. 2012 – 'Simple Tales III', Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai, India; 'fiVe', Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai, India; ; 2011 – 'Maximalism', Lessing1 Artespace, Zurich; 'Project India', False Ceiling, Mumbai; 'Live Art', BAR1, Bangalore, India; 2010 – 'Final year exhibition', Rachana Sansad AFAC, Piramal Gallery Mumbai, India.

Sahej Rahal

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In 2016, taking a dramatic shift in style and media from the paintings and sculptures he had previously produced, Anselm Reyle created a series of sculptural objects in the form of large ceramic vases. The strong textures and vivid colour of his previous practice were carried forward to this new body of work.

Stylistically similar to West German Art Pottery of the 1950–60s, many of Reyle's handmade objects were created in collaboration with German ceramic factories employing traditional techniques. One of these techniques is commonly, if somewhat erroneously, referred to as 'Fat Lava'. Fat Lava as a term is often used to reference all West German Art Pottery, but specifically it describes a type of thick, flowing glaze, which is a feature of much, but not all, ceramic work of that period. Technically known as a volcanic glaze, the chemical composition of Fat Lava leads to the development of bubbles, or 'pores', during firing, giving the surface of the finished object a pumice-like appearance.

To some extent Reyle's earlier work, which questioned the relationship between high art and kitsch, resurfaced in his ceramics. These draw attention to the vagaries of the art market and its ability to transform a utilitarian, mass-produced domestic object into something collectible, sought after and valuable; or to do the opposite, making high-value artworks practically worthless overnight.

Reyle's new body of work also seems to question, or compound, the much-debated separation of art and craft. The art/craft schism has been an issue for several decades, and while many curators, critics and artist-makers prefer to think of it as a continuum with no clear boundaries, the pervasive view is that the difference is determined by intentionality. This dichotomy was established, and has persisted, predominately in the West, whereas in non-Western cultures, the distinction is less clear or simply doesn't exist. In Asia a ceramic teapot can be appreciated just as much for its aesthetics as it is for its function. Reyle's own use of ceramics has a relationship to Japanese culture and aesthetics. The Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi* proposes that an object can be impermanent and/or carry imperfections, yet it can be both practical and beautiful. In Japan, an old, broken teapot can be repaired in such a way that it takes on a new life; it becomes even more attractive and highly regarded, even though it may no longer be used as originally intended. Many of Reyle's works are vase-like, yet cannot function as such, since each one carries an intentional flaw – a crack or fissure that is clearly evident and places his works firmly in the realm of the art-object.
• Adrian George

Anselm Reyle Born 1970, Tübingen, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Galerie Almine Rech, Brussels; König Galerie, Berlin; 2016 – 'Keramik', Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin; 2013 – 'Ultracore', MAGASIN – Centre National D'Art Contemporain Grenoble, Grenoble, France; 2012 – 'Mystic Silver', Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany; 2011 – 'Anselm Reyle', Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; 2010 – 'Elemental Threshold', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium; 2009 – 'Monochrome Age', Gagosian Gallery, New York; 2008 – 'White Earth', Galerie Almine Rech, Brussels; 2007 – 'ARS NOVA', Kunsthalle Zürich. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Franz West – ARTISTCLUB', 21er Haus, Belvedere, Vienna; 2015 – 'Made in Germany: Contemporary Art from the Rubell Family Collection', McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; 'Deutsche Kunst nach 1960', Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg, Austria; 2013 – 'BubeDameKönigAss. Martin Eder, Michael Kunze, Anselm Reyle, Thomas Scheibitz', Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; 2011 – 'The Shape Of Things To Come: New Sculpture', The Saatchi Gallery, London; 2010 – 'Bilder über Bilder. Diskursive Malerei von Albers bis Zobernig aus der Daimler Kunstsammlung', mumok, Vienna; 2007 – 'The Artist's Dining Room: Manfred Kuttner, Anselm Reyle, Thomas Scheibitz', Tate Modern, London; 'Sequence 1', Palazzo Grassi, Venice.

Anselm Reyle





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↖ *Im Winde klirren die Fahnen (Twiggy)*, 2016
Glazed ceramics
38.5 × Ø 14 cm
(15 ¼ × Ø 5 ½ in)

← *Hole in the Sky*, 2016
Glazed ceramics
38 × Ø 14 cm
(14 × Ø 5 ½ in)

→ *Lamborghini Miura*, 2016
Glazed ceramics
119 × Ø 89 cm
(46 × Ø 35 in)

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← *Tequila Sunrise*, 2016
Glazed ceramics
152 × Ø 70 cm
(59¾ × Ø 27½ in)

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Looking at the work of the American artist Brie Ruais, the physicality of her relationship to clay is palpable. We can see the dynamism of her movements, her lived experience; how she likes to push the palm of her hand through this material spreading it outwards, or run her fingertips across it, channelling textured lines that pull the eye around, down or along her sculptures.

In *Premonition (with India Ink and 130 lbs of clay)* (2016) she kneels, naked, upon a bed of clay, spreading this into the shape of an X – a form that is mirrored in the cross that marks her own back (together, these equal XX, the female sex chromosomes). During a recent interview, she described her interest in conflating the female body with a body of earth through a practice of 'ecofeminism', which she says 'relates the oppression and domination of all subordinate groups (women, people of colour, children, the poor) to the oppression and domination of nature (animals, land, water, air, etc.)'. The work looks inwards at the body and its primordial physicality. It also centres on the traumatized body, while looking outward towards the land and the body's relation to earth.

Ruais' concern with gender results in sculptures reminiscent of the female X chromosome and the O of circles and holes. *Scraped Body Void, 130 lbs* (2016) is a wall-mounted ceramic, glazed in deep earthen tones. With a void at its centre from which clay is pushed outwards, it recalls a baking black sun of dark rays. Its form is powerful and bold, violent even, as clay is forced out of a void, bearing the marks of scratching or tearing, and embedded with finger and hand imprints. *Spreading Outward from Copper Center, 125lbs* (2016) is softer and gentler, a thick, circular mass of wall-mounted clay, seemingly emitting beams of light as it shimmers beneath a warm metallic glaze.

Ruais always works within self-imposed restrictions: 'I begin with a list of limitations that determine the weight of the clay (often equal to my own bodyweight), the action, the time, and the basic shape, and then confront the material with my body in a highly physical process that involves kneeling, kicking, spreading, scraping, and skimming.' The forms are then cut into tiles, glazed and fired. These tiles are pieced together (often forming a grid) to give a sense of a fragmented whole, one that has the potential of being both ordered and disrupted. *Area Whole, 300 lbs* (2014) comprises a wall-mounted grid within which a giant hole appears. Its title uses word play, underlining both the positive and negative space of this hole (the void is mounted on the wall while the matter itself is on the floor, representing the 'whole' area and volume of the 'hole'). Made using clay pigmented with colour – from teal to midnight blue, lilac to bubble-gum pink – sweeping, gestural strokes document how Ruais swiftly shaped this material. Finished with a clear glaze to highlight the tonal vibrancy, the work is characterized by its will to break free, away from the grid, constraint and order, ready to reconnect with the earth in the ground. • Louisa Elderton



Brie Ruais Born 1982, Southern California. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'According to the Body', YoungWorld, Detroit, Michigan; 'Where You No Longer Are, There is Your Desert', Thomas Hunter Project Space, New York; 2015 – '130 lbs of Pro ximal Frontage', Mesler/Feuer, New York; 2014 – 'Dugout', Galerie Lefebvre & Fils, Paris; 'Brie Ruais', Cooper Cole, Toronto; 2013 – 'XO', Nicole Klagsbrun, New York; 'Two Wholes', Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'New Ruins', American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC; 2016 – 'Breather', Laura Bartlett Gallery, London; '3 Sculptors', Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York; 'Splotch', Sperone Westwater, New York; 'Mal Maison', Maccarone, New York; 'Low', Lyles and King, New York; 2015 – 'Performative Process', Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, New York; 2014 – 'Brie Ruais & Anna Betbeze', Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles.

Brie Ruais



↑ *Area Whole, 300 lbs*, 2014
Pigmented and glazed ceramic, hardware
Square measures:
198 × 137 × 13 cm
(78 × 54 × 5 in)
Circle measures:
112 × 97 × 13 cm
(44 × 38 × 5 in)

↗ *Scraped Body Void, 130 lbs*, 2016
Glazed ceramic, hardware
142 × 146 × 27 cm
(56 × 57 × 10 ½ in)

↗↗ *Spreading Out from Center in Five Directions (Left Arm, Left Leg, Right Arm, Right Leg), 130 lbs*, 2016
Glazed porcelain, hardware
149 × 140 × 9 cm
(59 × 55 × 3 ½ in)

→ *Premonition (with India Ink and 130 lbs of clay)*, 2016
Video, 9 min

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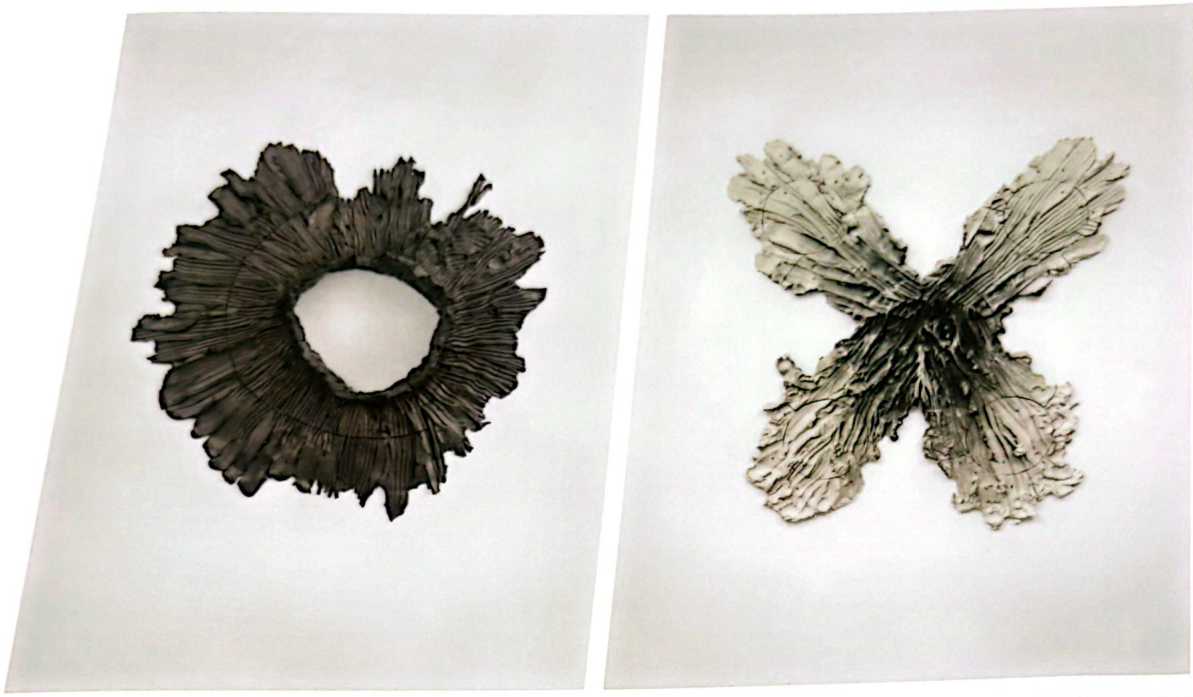



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Brie Ruais

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+ *Corner Push, 132 lbs (Metallic)*, 2014
Glazed ceramic, hardware
190 × 42 × 41 cm
(75 × 16 ½ × 16 in)

+ *Rammed 3, 132 lbs*, 2015
Glazed ceramic, hardware
130 × 74 × 15 cm
(51 × 29 × 6 in)

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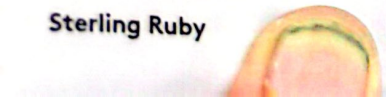
Sterling Ruby's prodigious and conflicted output holds creation and destruction, expression and repression in a visceral balance. Ruby himself credits his rural childhood for that, describing himself as 'a problematic kid who absolutely hated where I lived, which was this macho community in the middle of nowhere'. His response has been to apply a caricature of masculine vigour to the less expected zones of textiles and ceramics, just as much as to the more traditionally male fields of sculpture and painting, and to cite Amish quilt-making as an influence alongside urban punk and his previous streetlife as a skateboarder. Ruby's paintings use a spray can until it splutters its streaky last, and his monumental 'stalagmite' sculptures arrest vast pours of urethane. Where do the quilts come in? There are soft sculptures too, and he's a great recycler – the raw detritus of his studio floor feeds directly into the collages, and his clothes are made from offcuts.

All this comes together in Ruby's ceramics, which take their cue from the amateur products of art therapy and make no secret of their transformative struggle into being. The one-off pieces have a crude, highly glazed free-form immediacy which emphasizes the malleability they've lost. To put it doomily, they're memorials to a state which cannot be regained. In the 'Basin Theology' series, giant ashtray forms are filled with shards from misfired or damaged works. There's no shortage of supply: Ruby, who's been called an 'anti-ceramicist', admits he's no great technician, and says thirty per cent of his production explodes in the kiln. Everything in the shallow basins is fused under the pressure of subsequent reglazing and refiring, and we look down on what could be the finds from an archeological dig – indeed, says Ruby 'the studio has become a kind of excavation site for me'.

What are we to take from this willfully messy aesthetic? There's thrill and swagger here, but also redundancy and bombast. Ruby has said he 'felt trapped by a kind of post-modern burden of ideas, theories, and histories. It seemed impossible to make a sincere gesture anymore. This was my monument to all of that.' Paradoxically, perhaps, given how he hates his background, one might also be reminded of the communities left without purpose and pride following the loss of traditional male jobs in heavy manufacturing. Ruby seems to be maximizing the energies of that way of being, like one last flaring of a light before it dies. The stilled fluidities then stand for being stuck in time, for an inability to move on. Out of the stasis come the gangs, graffiti and vandalism which correspond to the broken aspect of Ruby's ceramics. • Paul Carey-Kent



Sterling Ruby Born 1972, Bitburg American Air Base, Germany. Lives and works in Los Angeles. Select Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Sterling Ruby', Gagosian Gallery, New York; 2016 – 'THE JUNGLE', Sprüth Magers, Berlin; 'Sterling Ruby', Winterpalais, Belvedere Museum, Vienna; 2015 – 'STOVES', Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris; 'PARIS', Gagosian Gallery Rue de Ponthieu and Gagosian Gallery Le Bourget, Paris; 'SCALES', Xavier Hufkens, Brussels; 2014 – 'STERLING RUBY', Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Made in L.A. 2016: a, the, though, only', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'L.A. Exuberance: New Gifts by Artists', Los Angeles County Museum of Art; 'A Whisper of Where It Came From', Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri; 'Illumination', Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; 2014 – 'Taipei Biennial 2014: The Great Acceleration', Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan; 'The Los Angeles Project', Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; '10th Gwangju Biennale: Burning Down the House', Gwangju, South Korea; 'Whitney Biennial 2014', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



↑ *Basin Theology/Camp Routh*, 2011
Ceramic
20.3 × 100.3 × 96.5 cm
(8 × 39½ × 38 in)

↗ *Brass Ketamine User*, 2010
Ceramic
38.1 × 68.6 × 35.6 cm
(15 × 27 × 14 in)

→ *BASKET (6176)*, 2016
Ceramic
31.1 × 88.9 × 35.6 cm
(12¼ × 35 × 14 in)

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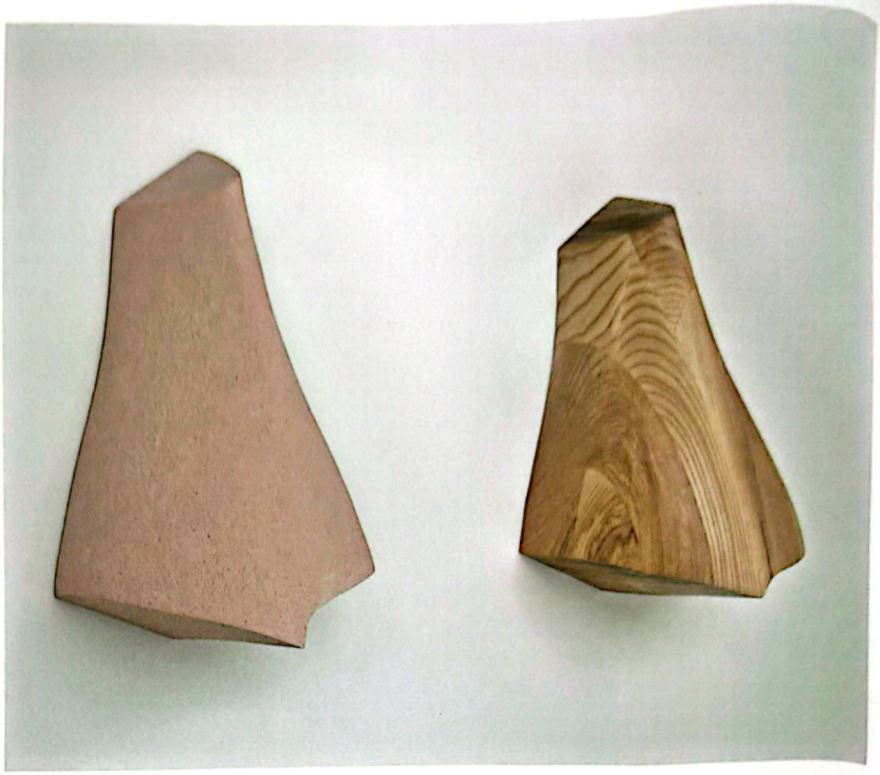
'When I move, the clay moves.' The phrase of sculptor Tony Cragg is one Anders Ruhwald is fond of. An emphasis on ceramics as a vehicle for selfhood was apparent in his 2014 show at Galerie Nillson et Chiglien, Hong Kong, 'The view from the sides of my nose'. Inspired by the theory that the distorted form of prehistoric artefacts like the 'Willendorf Venus' were the result of female craftswomen looking down at their own bodies, Ruhwald explored the role of position in determining vision (try to see your own nose and the strange contours of *My Nose as Seen With my Eyes – version A & B* (2013) become understandable). Additionally, every work in the exhibition existed as a pair of 'versions'; *Bowl (Black Hole) – Version A & B* (2013) comprised two straight-edged bowls glazed carbon grey, but one smooth as brushed metal, the other lumpy as porridge.

This same interest in variation was apparent in the exhibition 'You in between' at Oslo's Kunstnerforbundet the same year. In one room stood two rows of largely amorphous forms, alternating in complementary shades of blue and orange. The two parades of objects mostly mirrored each other but for their surfaces, which in one row were smoothly finished, and in the other messy and finger-worked. A curtain hanging between the rows made direct visual comparison difficult, so the variation could be recognized only over time. Ruhwald seemed to imply that the business of subjectivity – the 'You' of the show's title – arises in just this perception of differences, one that is both durational and spatially determined.

The use of the dividing curtain is typical of Ruhwald's use of low-key scenography, often with a domestic flavour. Head of Ceramics at the Cranbrook Academy in Michigan, for the installation *Anatomy of a Home* (2013) Ruhwald made discreet interventions in Cranbook campus's Saarinen House, a jewel of Scandinavian Modernism. At the centre of the dining room, he placed a bowl on whose edge the glaze appeared to drip *upwards*. Suggesting time momentarily frozen – and/or, the slow accretion of stalagmites – the bowl resonated with the immaculately preserved surroundings of Saarinen House. Playing with such ideas through the language of decorative arts is typical for Ruhwald, for whom the messy practicality of objects is something to be embraced, not occluded; when installing ceramic lamp works at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art in 2008, he insisted on having them plugged into visible power points in the otherwise neutralized gallery space. Rarely appearing on plinths, his forms occupy a place equidistant from sculpture and design.

In 2014 Ruhwald began to create a sequence of apparently burnt out environments throughout a house in Detroit; he named it *Unit 1: 3583 Dubois* after a nearby address lost (as many in Detroit are) to fire. The large, rounded, monochrome ceramics, subsequently displayed at MOCA Cleveland, Ohio, in 2016, carry a mysterious charge, as if ritual objects of an alien culture. Was one a radio dish, another a storage jar? What power might they hold, after the fire? For Ruhwald, the answers depend on whom you ask, and where you're standing. • Matthew McLean



Anders Ruhwald Born 1974, Randers, Denmark. Lives and works in Detroit, Michigan. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles; 'Glasur Stykker', Volume Gallery, Chicago; 2016 – 'Unit 1: 3583 Dubois', Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio; 2015 – 'The Charred Room', Volume Gallery, Chicago; 2013 – 'The View from the Sides of my Nose', Galerie Nilsson et Chiglien, Hong Kong; 'The Anatomy of a Home', Saarinen House, Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan; 2008 – 'You in between', mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Mindcraft', Danish Art Foundation, Cloister of San Simpliciano, Milan; 2016 – 'Fireworks', Galleri SO, London, UK; 'War Games', Moran Bondaroff, Detroit, Michigan; 2015 – 'Cheongju International Craft Biennale', Cheongju, South Korea; 2014 – 'Nocturnal Labyrinth', Miyako Yoshinaga Art Prospects, New York; 2012 – 'Metadomestic', Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK; 2011 – 'WANI', Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris; 'Overthrown', Denver Art Museum, Colorado.

Anders Ruhwald

↑ *My Nose as Seen With my Eyes – Version A & B*, 2013
Earthenware and wood
Each 28 × 12 × 13 cm
Each (11 × 4¾ × 5⅛ in)

↗ *Bowl (Black Hole) – Version A & B*, 2013
Stoneware
Each 10 × Ø 24 cm
Each (4 × Ø 9½ in)

→ *The Charred Room*, 2016
Glazed ceramics, charred wood and steel
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Unit 1: 3583 Dubois' exhibition, MOCA Cleveland, Ohio

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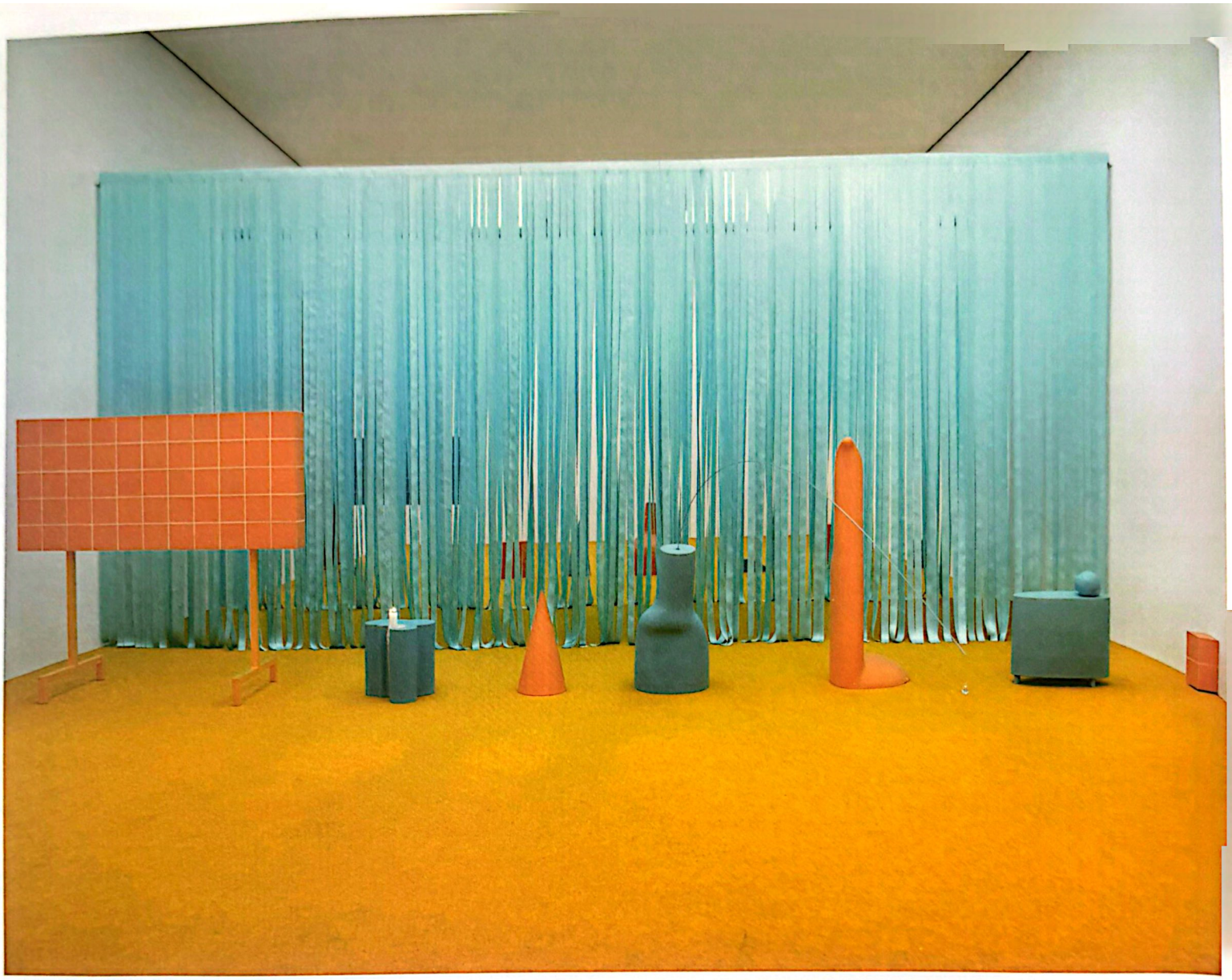

Anders Ruhwald

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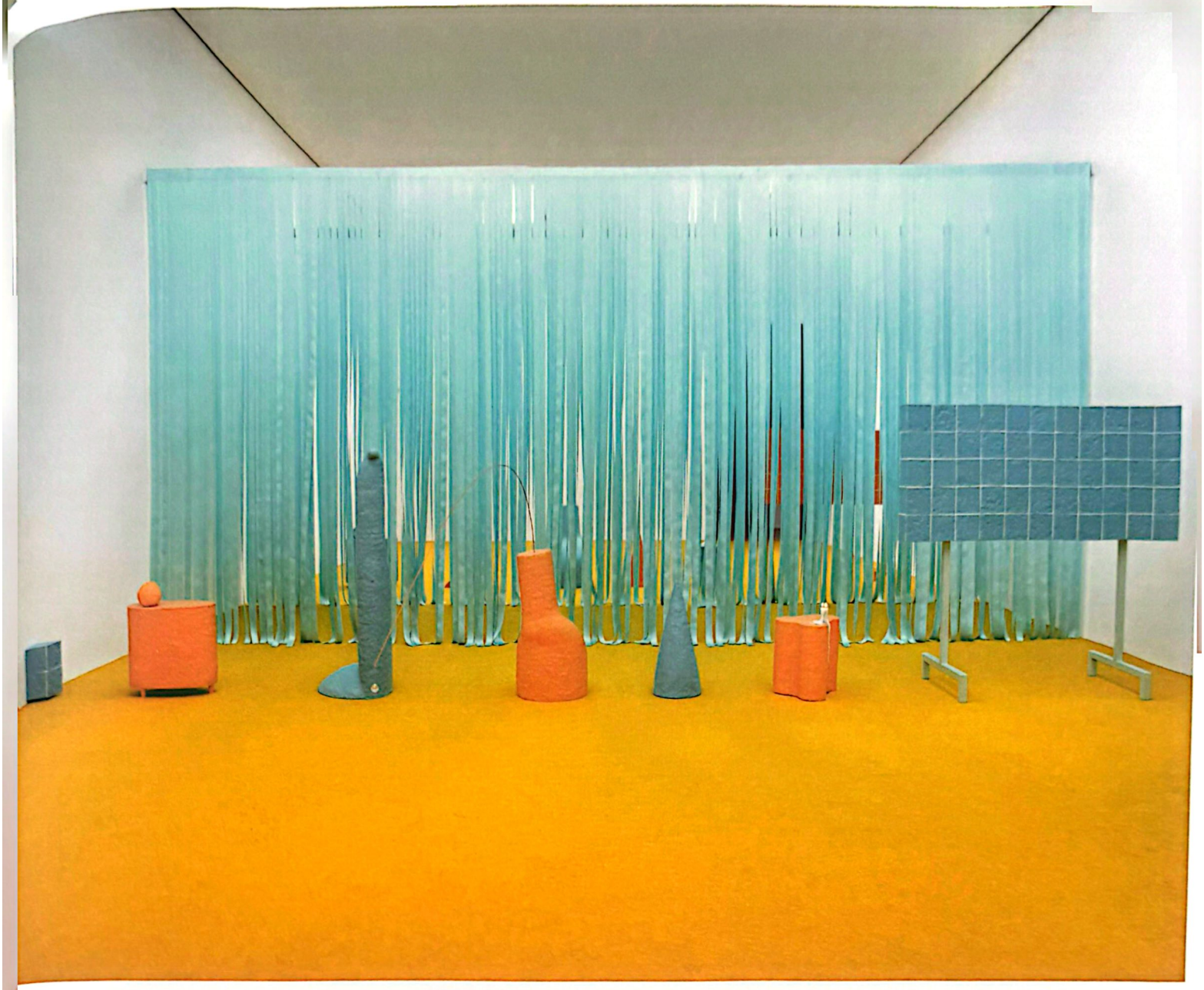

You in between, 2008
Glazed earthenware, glass, painted steel, string and candles
Variable dimensions
Installation views, mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK, 2008

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Thomas Schütte's art is remarkable in its breadth and variety. Since the 1980s he has worked with a variety of media, though it is ceramics that in recent years have come to dominate his practice. Working in a broadly figurative mode, Schütte is known for his strange and disturbing transformations of the human form, such as in his 'Bronzefrau' sculptures (2000–6) where recumbent female figures mutate into distorted forms. These large bronzes are based on smaller ceramic models made in the late 1990s. The malleable nature of clay lends itself to such twisted contortions, its immediacy and ability to be quickly manipulated by hand allowing for a playful spontaneity. Schütte exploits this to great effect in the 'Großer Doppelköpf' series (2015), where clay is embraced as a primary medium rather than as part of the casting process. These two-faced ceramic busts suggest a contemporary re-imagining of the Roman deity Janus. However, examples such as *Großer Doppelköpf Nr. 6*, with its strikingly different physiognomies, perhaps point to a schizophrenic personality divided against itself.

Faces, though barely human in appearance, are the focus of Schütte's 'Basler Masken' (2014). These gargoyle-like sculptures are based on masks the artist designed for the Alti Richtig group, a band of street musicians who perform at Basel's annual Fasnacht carnival. With fierce, almost demonic expressions, the richly glazed works relate to the traditional masks of European folk culture and the ancient pagan belief in a world of magical spirits. Schütte's representation of the human form is, however, not always grotesque or otherworldly. His 2014 series of oval ceramic tiles feature delicately rendered sketches of female heads drawn from life. These simple drawings, with their fluid, Matisse-like lines, are carved directly into the wet clay and embellished with coloured glazes. A similar series of tiles, titled 'Blumenoval' (2014), depict flowers, another of Schütte's recurring motifs that appear as a gentle counter to his more unsettling imagery.

Heads of a quirkier nature are found in Schütte's 'Eierkopf' series (2014). While these ceramic sculptures all adopt a similar egg-like form, each ovoid has its own individual characteristics. Eyes and mouths formed by incisions in the clay create a range of simple yet evocative facial expressions. Some appear like extra-terrestrial creatures, others as artefacts from ancient civilizations. Schütte's choice of glazes has produced an array of colours ranging from hues of earthy bronze and deep orange to bright turquoise and lustrous silver. Incidental drips and other unintended marks cover the sculpture's variegated surfaces – chance elements that are welcomed and even encouraged by the artist. Far slicker in execution are the 'Gartenzwerge' sculptures (2015–16). Although the German title translates as 'garden gnomes', these large, faceless figures appear more like giant chess pieces or enormous saltshakers. Such ambiguities surface repeatedly in Schütte's work and, while the artist deliberately avoids offering interpretive guidance, his ceramics are firmly located within his broader enquiries regarding the nature and function of art and the complexities of the human condition. • David Trigg

Thomas Schütte Born 1954, Oldenburg, Germany. Lives and works in Düsseldorf. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'United Enemies', Moderna Museet, Stockholm; 2015 – 'Crystal', The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts; 2014 – 'Thomas Schütte', Kunsthalle Vogelmann, Heilbronn, Germany; 2013 – Fondation Beyeler, Switzerland; 'Houses', Kunstmuseum, Lucerne, Switzerland; 2012 – 'Faces and Figures', Serpentine Gallery, London; 'Wattwanderung', K21 Standehaus, Düsseldorf; 'Ceramics', Middelheimmuseum, Pavilion Het Huis, Antwerp; 'Frauen', Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy, and touring to Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – Still, Produzentengalerie Hamburg, Germany; 2015 – 'Sculpture: Muñoz, Schütte, Trockel, and Warren', Skarstedt Chelsea, New York; 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2014 – 'The Human Factor', Hayward Gallery, London; '2013 – 'Prima Materia' Palazzo Grassi, Francois Pinault Foundation, Venice; 'Biographical Forms', Carré d'Art, Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France; 'Faces: Between Figures, Portraits, and Masks', Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany; 'Low Tide Wandering', Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK.

Thomas Schütte



↑ *Großer Doppelkopf Nr. 6*, 2015
Glazed ceramic, steel
208 × 120 × 80 cm
(81 × 47¼ × 31½ in)

↗ *Basler Maske*, 2014
Glazed ceramic
40.5 × 32 × 20 cm
(15 × 12½ × 7 in)

↗↗ *Eierkopf halb*, 2014
Glazed ceramic
15 × 26 × 34 cm
(6 × 10¼ × 13½ in)

→ *Gartenzwerge*, 2015/2016
Glazed ceramic
Installation view, Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf, 2016

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Marcia Schvartz is a painter whose imagery is poised between the intimate and the public, the subjective and the common. Coiled around Argentina's political history, her work is preoccupied with representing different types of social encounters and people in their everyday context. Her paintings depict friends and colleagues such as *Nelba* (2011) or *Gardelita* (2012) as well as emblematic figures like Evita or late Argentinian president Cristina Kirchner. The city's streets, its neighbourhoods and characters, its bars, prostitutes and lovers, all are shown in pictures that are colourful but serious. In contrast, the artist's ceramic work provides welcome relief from the weight of her paintings.

Schvartz looks to the tactile possibilities of clay, as primordial matter, valuing it for its mass and texture. And because most of her clay works depict nature, they draw upon and reflect this simplicity. Her clumsy, colourful flowers from the 1990s reveal a childish pleasure in the material. However, they are also carriers of subtle messages about death and sex, a tone explicitly emphasized in the organic forms of bulbs, fruits and shoots, that are genital though not necessarily erotic. There is a tension in these early ceramics between innocence and experience, the pristine and the crude.

In 2016, the artist presented a series of flat, circular *mise en scènes* that incorporate dyed wool as well as clay. Raw materials take centre of stage here, displacing the emotional tension of her earlier works. The rough fleece serves as a setting for earthenware that shyly peeks out from the centre of these compositions. For example, in *Flor del Valle* (2016) textured renderings of pollen and stamen emerge from inside smooth clay petals; or in *Paisaje vallista II* (2016) a shape reminiscent of a cactus plant sits surrounded by a woollen landscape of deep purples, browns and blues.

While most of Schvartz's work is concerned with the depiction of cosmopolitan social dynamics, these woollen pieces show a connection to a different community and a different history. She has explained: 'I am fascinated by the North of the country [Argentina], its culture and its landscape. To me, it has to do with human essence: mud and wool have to do with man and women's basic work.' Her clay is sourced from the banks of the Calchaquí River – as locals have been doing for centuries. This is an area where archaeologists unearth clay artefacts from the very same ground that provides the new clay for Schvartz's work. As she reproduces and continues this practice, she confers on it a new temporality, linking past and present. Describing her urban paintings, curator Roberto Amigo has said that Marcia Schvartz's practice is one that deals with 'the perception of the self in contemporaneity'. Her ceramics link to a different perception of the self, one that is both contemporary and historically rooted.
• Catalina Imizcoz



↑ *Animaná*, 2016
Clay and wool
80 × 60 cm
(31½ × 23⅝ in)

↗ *Paisaje vallista II*, 2016
Clay and wool
27 × 52 × 52 cm
(10⅝ × 20½ × 20½ in)

→ *Flor del Valle*, 2016
Clay and wool
16 × 54 × 54 cm
(6¼ × 21¼ × 21¼ in)

Marcia Schvartz Born 1955, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Lives and works in Buenos Aires. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Ojo', Colección Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, Buenos Aires; 'Barroco Digital', Museo Jallpha Calchaqui, San Carlos, Salta, Argentina; 2015 – 'Marciamundi', Casa Central de la Cultura Popular, Ministerio de Cultura de la Nación, Buenos Aires; 2013 – 'Zoolatrías y entidades extrañas', Universidad Católica Argentina, Buenos Aires; 2011 – 'Pasionaria', Espacio de Arte Fundación OSDE, Rosario, Argentina; 2009 – 'Norte Negro', Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes Timoteo E. Navarro, Tucumán, Argentina; 2008 – 'El ánima', Museo Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Congreso de Tucumán: 200 años de arte argentino', Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes Timoteo Navarro, San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina; 'Verboamérica Colección Malba', Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Argentina; 2015 – 'Premio Nacional de Pintura Banco Central', Banco Central de la República Argentina, and touring to Palais de Glace, Argentina; 2014 – '¿Cuándo empieza el arte contemporáneo?', ArteBA, Buenos Aires; 2010 – 'Identidad del Sur. Arte argentino contemporáneo', Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC; 2009 – 'Adquisiciones, donaciones y comodatos', Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires.

Marcia Schvartz

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When it comes to religious theories about the origin of humankind, both the Bible and the Quran propose that God formed man out of clay. It is apt, then, that the puppets in Wael Shawky's film *The Path to Cairo* (2012) – part of the Egyptian artist's epic trilogy exploring the Christian-Muslim Crusades from an Arab perspective – are themselves fashioned from this material. The thirty-centimetre (one-foot) high marionettes with their characterful faces and intricate moving parts are remarkably expressive, an important aspect that Shawky found he could only achieve with ceramic. The film is the second in Shawky's 'Cabaret Crusades' (2010–15), a series that developed out of earlier work dealing with the social upheaval of momentous political, cultural and religious events in the Arab world. *Telematch Sadat* (2007), for instance, is a dramatic re-enactment of the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, but instead of using professional actors Shawky employed children. The youthful naivety of their performances lent the film a candid and essential simplicity; and yet children are notoriously hard to direct, a challenge that led the artist to consider using marionettes in his later work.

In *The Horror Show File* (2010), the first episode in Shawky's *Crusades* trilogy, 120 antique wooden marionettes enact events surrounding the Crusaders' first attempt to capture the Holy Land in 1095. For *The Path to Cairo*, which recounts events leading to the Second Crusade in 1147, Shawky fabricated his own ceramic marionettes in the French town of Aubagne (whereas in the third film, *The Secrets of Karbala*, 2015, the characters are made of Venetian glass). Famed for its superior quality clay, Aubagne has enjoyed a long history as a centre for ceramic production and even boasts its own ceramic school. Shawky designed 110 marionettes – most of which resemble humans, though some have animal-like features – making his ambitious and meticulously crafted characters with the assistance of Aubagne's ceramics specialists. Complex mechanisms, like those controlling the movement of the puppets' eyes, were particularly challenging and many obstacles were surmounted to realize Shawky's vision.

The visually rich film uses sets based on Islamic illuminated manuscripts, creating a flattened, two-dimensional backdrop against which the horrors of war – acts of cruelty, greed, violence and betrayal – are played out. Although the Crusaders are shown destroying everything in their path, Shawky does not portray the Arabs as passive victims but as active participants in their own demise. Just as clay is malleable, history is itself easily shaped by those with power, an observation that caused Shawky to question the established European narrative of the Crusades after reading Amin Maalouf's influential book, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* (1983). The strings of his marionettes are deliberately left visible, alluding to mechanisms of control; as Shawky has said, 'we are all like marionettes, manipulated by forces we cannot see'. This suspicion of history underpins much of the artist's work, which speaks as much to the present age as it does to the past. • David Trigg

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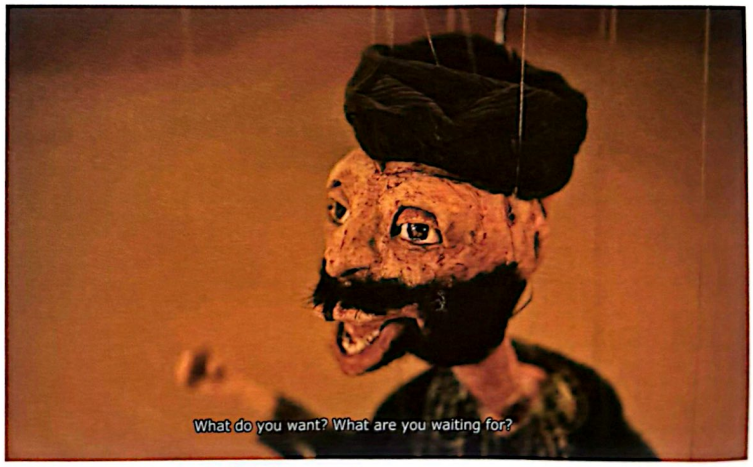
Wael Shawky Born 1971 Alexandria, Egypt. Lives and works in Alexandria, Egypt, and Philadelphia. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark; 2017 – Lisson Gallery, New York; 2016 – 'Wael Shawky, Al Araba Al Madfuna', Fondazione Merz, Turin, Italy; 'Wael Shawky', Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; 'Wael Shawky', Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria; 2015 – 'Crusades and Other Stories', MATHAF: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar; 'Cabaret Crusades', MoMA PS1, New York; 'Cabaret Crusades', Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Reconstruction of Story II: Duncan Campbell, The Otolith Group, and Wael Shawky,' National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul; 'The Migrant (Moving) Image,' Tale of a Tub, Vanity Projects, New York and Miami; 'Performer/Audience/Mirror', Lisson Gallery, London; 'The Time is Out of Joint,' Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates; 'Une Brève Histoire de L'Avenir,' Musée du Louvre, Paris; 'Saltwater', 14th Istanbul Biennial; 'Mario Merz Prize', Fondazione Merz, Turin; 'Too early, too late: Middle East and Modernity', Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Italy; 'Cross Section of a Revolution', Lisson Gallery, London.

Wael Shawky









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‹‹ *Cabaret Crusades I: The Horror Show File*, 2010
HD video, colour, sound, English subtitles
31:49 min

‹ *Cabaret Crusades II: The Path to Cairo*, 2012
HD video, colour, sound, English subtitles
60 min

† **Cabaret Crusades II: The Path to Cairo, 2012**
Custom-made ceramic figures, handmade costumes crafted in lace, cotton, velvet and silk, and string
Variable dimensions

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Voluptuous, brawny, delicate, precarious, magical. Such disparate words can describe the breadth of Arlene Shechet's inventive and masterful sculptures, whether her early Buddha forms made of plaster and acrylic paint or her recent abstract sculptures rendered in ceramic and multiple glazes. Works such as *Tattletale* (2012) beckon the viewer through her unexpected combinations of form, colour and material. At its centre, black and dense intestinal shapes appear to slither like snakes, irrational and organic. Layered on top and below this overall amorphous darkness are colourfully painted firebricks, stacked and architectural. The juxtaposition is both startling and altogether convincing.

Since her early days as a student at Rhode Island School of Design, Shechet has always been open to working in a variety of media. Over the years, she has used materials as diverse as plaster, acrylic, cast paper, porcelain, wood and crystal. In 2006 Shechet began sculpting in clay. Exemplary of this new exploration, *Twin Rockers* (2007) offers a rather unusual, distinct form, in which Shechet unabashedly exposes the inherent properties of clay – its rawness and ability to permanently capture the artist's hand in three dimensions. She renders these ceramic sculptures with vulnerable authenticity and daring improvization. Shechet's preference for asymmetry and a complexity that is sometimes illogical, even indescribable, can be seen in the ways her sculptures defy gravity as they tilt precariously on their pedestals, or sink heavily, almost collapsing into their hollowed forms.

Unlike a painter who might begin with the prescribed format of a rectilinear canvas, Shechet thrives from the freedom and challenge to create an entirely new three-dimensional form each time. As she explained in 2015, 'Clay is extremely elemental. There's nothing about it that attractive or interesting ... The lack of beauty in its raw state is important to me because it gives me great freedom. Because it has no character I can make anything. It's just there to be invented.' Furthermore, unlike a painter who can see the exact colour of paint being used each time, Shechet relies on instinct and past experience when applying her glazes, which, no matter what the eventual colour after firing in the kiln, appear grey when liquid. Yet despite performing a process very different from that of painting, Shechet produces in the end a unique amalgam of sculpture and painting, combining sculpted forms with exquisite layers of painted glazes.

The originality and sheer variety that Shechet achieves in her works are further emphasized through their installation. Objects to be seen in the round, her ceramic sculptures rest on a variety of pedestals. Whether made of concrete, steel, wood or brick, each pedestal or base contributes significantly to the overall composition, through the addition of a new texture, material, colour or form, as well as height. Shechet's works are a statement of open-ended bravura, a mastery of material and a willingness to explore what is uncomfortable and unexpected. What Shechet's sculptures illuminate are the infinite possibilities of artistic invention. • Tricia Y. Paik





Arlene Shechet Born 1951, New York. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2018 – Public Art Installation for Mad. Sq. Art, Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York; 2017 – 'From Here on Now', The Phillips Collection, Washington. DC; 'Porcelain, No Simple Matter: Arlene Shechet and the Arnhold Collection', The Frick Collection, New York; 2016 – 'Urgent Matter', Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Missouri; 2015 – 'All At Once', ICA Boston; 2014 – 'Meissen Recast', Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; 2013 – 'That Time', Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina'; 2010 – 'Here and There', MOCA Denver, Colorado; 'Blow by Blow', F. Y. Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'No Rules, No Rules', Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York; 'As if in a foreign country', Rosemarie Schwarzwälder Gallery, Vienna; 'A Whisper of Where it Came From', Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri; 'Le Souffler: Schürmann meets Ludwig', Ludwig Forum Aachen, Germany; 2015 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 'Bottoms Up: A Sculpture Survey', The University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington.

Arlene Shechet

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Tattletale, 2012
Glazed ceramic, glazed firebrick, Plexiglass
160 × 62 × 56 cm
(63 × 24 ½ × 22 in)

Twin Rockers, 2007
Glazed ceramic, steel, painted plywood
142 × 89 × 53 cm
(56 × 35 × 21 in)

Seeing is Believing, 2015
Glazed ceramic, painted steel
155 × 66 × 61 cm
(61 × 26 × 24 in)

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Shechet

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Installation view,
'Slip' exhibition, Sikkema
Jenkins & Co., New York, 2013

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When discussing the ceramics that he has produced over the past four decades, Richard Slee is much clearer about what they are not than what they are. They are absolutely not craft pottery. Neither are they industrial products, despite appearances. They are not functional, or at least not meant primarily to be so, even if the occasional jug might theoretically hold liquid. They are not organic, neither in their emulation of natural surfaces nor in their retention of traces of their maker's hand. Though they are often very highly finished, they are not concerned with technical skill. Much of his work is not even ceramic, although Slee is deeply embedded within the history of the medium.

It was Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe who observed, 'we never see the true state of our condition till it is illustrated to us by its contraries'. Slee's ceramics are contrary to say the least, but in that contrariness they reveal not only our condition, but their own. A major strategy within his work, especially in recent years, has been to make ceramic versions of objects that could not possibly function in that material. A saw, for instance, or a hammer. *Pickaxe* (2010) is an approximately life-sized remake of the eponymous tool, with a real wooden pickaxe handle. Only the metal head has been replaced with a glazed ceramic surrogate, which would shatter instantly were the tool to be swung against any hard surface.

There is something else odd about *Pickaxe*. The new, ceramic head is green and brown, textured to resemble the bark of a gnarled and knotted tree. It is like the pickaxe that a gnome might carry in a Disney cartoon. Beyond the humour of the conjunction of the head and the handle – ceramic masquerading as natural wood versus wood masquerading as something smooth and man made – the work contains a further joke about the material and cultural pretensions of ceramics.

Slee's oeuvre might be said, at its root, not to be about ceramics at all, but about Britishness. His early education in ceramics was based in the English tradition of pottery established in the eighteenth century during the Industrial Revolution, when factories in Stoke-on-Trent mass produced wares for middle-class homes. British potters like Wedgwood and Spode found ways to emulate fine Dutch and German porcelain, which was itself an emulation of antique Chinese styles and techniques.

The history of clay – the very basest of materials – is bound up in aspiration. Slee's work pokes fun at po-faced British class signifiers, whether in his series 'Umbrellas' (2015), in which he replaces the black fabric of traditional gentleman's umbrellas with ceramic forms including a tree trunk and a carrot; or in 'Beaters' (2010) where peach-coloured, flower-shaped trophies are stacked upon shelves – a garden of glory. For this series, Slee cast a plastic version of a traditional cane carpet beater (found in a shop in Greece) in ceramic, mounting his estranged casts in Bakelite trophy bases. The status of the decorative, though useless, 'Beaters' is simultaneously elevated and deflated by Slee's transformation.
• Jonathan Griffin

Richard Slee Born 1946, Carlisle, Cumbria, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2014 – 'Work and Play', Tullie House Art Gallery, Carlisle, and touring to Nottingham Castle Museum, UK; Oriel Myrddin Gallery, Carmarthen, UK; and Tramway, Glasgow; 2013 – 'Richard Slee: Fit for Purpose', Hales Gallery, London; 2012 – 'Richard Slee: Camp Futility', Studio Voltaire, London; 2010 – 'Richard Slee', Hales Gallery, London; 'Richard Slee: From Utility to Futility' Victoria & Albert Museum, London; 2008 – 'Richard Slee, Recent Works', Barrett Marsden Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Things of Beauty Growing: British Studio Pottery', Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut; and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK; ' That Continuous Thing: Artists and the Ceramics Studio,1920–Today', Tate St. Ives, UK; 2015 – 'CERAMIX', The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, and touring to La Maison Rouge, Paris; and Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, France; 2012 – 'British Design 1948–2012: Victoria & Albert Museum', London; 2011 – 'Postmodernism', Victoria & Albert Museum, London; 2008 – 'Masterpieces in Ceramics from the V&A', The Korea Foundation Cultural Centre, Seoul and Hetjens Museum, Düsseldorf, Germany.





Richard Slee



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Umbrellas, 2015
Glazed ceramic
70 × 15 × 12 cm
(28 × 6 × 5 in)
Installation view, 'Work and Play' exhibition, Nottingham Castle Museum, UK

Pickaxe, 2010
Ceramic, wood, pickaxe handle
87 × 60 × 9 cm
(34¼ × 23⅝ × 3½ in)

Beaters, 2010
Ceramic, trophy bases
Each c.44 × 20 × 17 cm
(c.17 × 8 × 7 in)









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Born in Hong Kong, raised in Australia and now living in Britain, Renee So's work is informed by her heritage and transnationality. She first started to use clay when she moved to London in 2005 and attended a clay workshop. She began to investigate the history of European sculpture, from Assyrian, Classical Greek and Roman statuary to the domestic, everyday use of made objects. Being based in Britain, Europe was easily accessible, enabling her to travel and see the originals that were the focus of her study.

So's research is broad and diachronic, touching on mythology, folklore, drunks, rakes and kings. Her sophisticated, archipelagic creolization brings together these reference points without erasing the original culture markers – in this instance reaching back to the masculine stereotypes which So's work gently mocks. In her 'Bellarmine' series (2010–16), each bust is created through a reductive process, a sort of minimal realism that results in delicately crafted, cartoon-like portraits with extravagant hair and beards. The gravitas usually associated with formal portrait busts is undermined by So's parodic playfulness. Drawn to the ceramic collections of London's Victoria & Albert Museum, So is fascinated by Bellarmine stoneware, sometimes referred to as Bartmann jugs, from the German for 'bearded man'. These jugs were made from a vitreous or semi-vitreous ceramic, fired at a very high temperature and so waterproof even when unglazed. Designed in the shape of a rotund, unshaven man, these jugs were made to hold beer, wine or food and became popular in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany. The masculine motifs used on the vessels hark back to the Wild Man of German folklore (equivalent to the Green Man in Britain), prevalent in European art and literature throughout the medieval period.

In So's work, these figures link to satyrs and fauns and to the Greek and Roman gods of the forest and fertility: Silvanus and Dionysius/Bacchus respectively. Usually shown with a full beard, the gods – and in turn the beard itself – become associated with wisdom, masculinity, strength, virility and pride. Further investigating the signifiers of masculinity, in more recent work exhibited at Kate MacGarry, London in 2016, So took items that one might associate with a gentleman's club, such as wine glasses and cigarettes, and by anthropomorphosis created oversized ceramic objects that speak of gender, class and privilege.

So is fascinated by craft, the art of making, and most of her two-dimensional works are knitted and are inspired by medieval tapestries. She rarely shows her ceramic sculptural works without some related knitted pieces. These two mediums (ceramic and textile) are associated with both manual skill and low-paid labour, notions that in So's work carry a subtle gender and socio-political subtext. • Adrian George





Renee So Born 1974, Hong Kong. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Vessel Man', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; 'Renee So', Kate MacGarry, London; 2012 – 'Renee So', Kate MacGarry, London; 'Renee So', Marc Jancou Contemporary, Geneva; 2011 – 'Barbuto', Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland, New Zealand; 2010 – 'Renee So', Uplands Gallery, Melbourne, Australia. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'One Day, Something Happens: Paintings of People: A Selection by Jennifer Higgie from the Arts Council Collection', Leeds Art Gallery, UK and touring to Nottingham Castle, UK; Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, UK; Atkinson Gallery, Southport, UK; Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, UK; 2015 – 'Busts, David Noonan, Renee So, Runa Islam', Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland, New Zealand; 2014 – 'Selected by...', Limoncello, London; 'House Party with Dzek', Kate MacGarry, London; 2013 – 'A Conspiracy of Detail', Mackintosh Museum, Glasgow School of Art; 2012 – 'Dawn Chorus', Leeds Art Gallery; 2011 – 'Keno Twins 5', Barriera, Turin, Italy; 'First Show', KalimanRawlins, Melbourne, Australia; 2010 – 'Keno Twins 4', Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany.

Renee So



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Fragment, 2012
Glazed ceramic, birch, plywood
45 × 37 × 11 cm
(17¾ × 14½ × 4¼ in)

Bellarmine X, 2012
Glazed ceramic, birch, plywood
47 × 50 × 50 cm
(18½ × 19¾ × 19¾ in)

Installation view, 'Vessel Man' exhibition, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 2016

Bellarmine IX, 2012
Ceramic
50 × 28 × 30 cm
(19¾ × 11 × 11¾ in)

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So

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ation views,
MacGarry, London, 2016

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In 2014, the same year she completed her master's degree in painting at London's Royal College of Art, Marlene Steyn held her debut solo exhibition, 'How Cannibals Cuddle', at Cabin Gallery in south London. The exhibition was composed of five drawings, three paintings on unstretched linen and four sculptures, two of them made from clay. The show introduced viewers to Steyn's cartoonish doppelgänger with yellow hair, interchangeably worn in pig-tails or flowing. Rendered in multiple, she appeared as both a flattened figure on a two-dimensional plane and as a 'fleshed out' – if insistently unrefined – sculpted form. Four more solo exhibitions, two apiece in London and Cape Town, followed in quick succession.

The artist's busy exhibition programme over the course of 2015–16 enabled her to refine her tropical psycho-surrealist vision, which is dominated by naked bathers, pig-tailed adolescents and macabre feminine figures with missing torsos. It also saw Steyn assertively reposition her sculptural practice. Although integral from the outset, in her earlier exhibitions Steyn's sculptures were far smaller and overshadowed by her large paintings. Made in 2013, *Becoming a Braid (All she ever wanted to be)* is a thirty-one-centimetre (around twelve-inch) high fired-clay totem composed of a stack of four yellow-haired doppelgängers. Included in her debut exhibition, the work was displayed in a corner, on a plinth barely raised off the floor. The painted clay totem additionally features eight Ron Nagle-like spikes, suggestive of foliage – an important element of Steyn's fantastical *mise en scène*.

Also made in 2013 and included in the Cabin Gallery show, *Becoming a Braid (Voodoo Version)* is a grotesque anatomical interpretation of the artist's doppelgänger – imagine The Simpsons meets German anatomist Gunther Von Hagens – that is synchronous with her more recent practice. The sundered or absent torso is an important motif in Steyn's sculptural work, first introduced in her patinated bronze sculptures from 2014. It references her interest in French dramatist Antonin Artaud's idea of the 'body without organs', a device aimed at unsettling perceptions of the autonomous unity of human subjects. Steyn's 2016 Cape Town exhibition 'Your Skin is not the Best Hiding Place' included a number of oil-on-ceramic sculptures that developed this motif, depicting bodily architectures composed only of limbs: *The Scream (Echo-Oh's)*, *Floating Buttress with Scrunchies* and *Bad Hair Day Trinal* (all 2016).

Steyn's interest in earlier twentieth-century avant-garde arts and letters, both as source and explication of her practice, extends to philosopher George Bataille and allegorical storyteller Jorge Luis Borges. The attenuated figures, partial bodies and preponderance of foliage in her work are, however, also influenced by her encounters with the fantastical illustrations appearing in arcane books like the Voynich manuscript, a fifteenth-century illustrated codex, the fourteenth-century *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and Italian artist and designer Luigi Serafini's *Codex Seraphinianus* (1981). The latter, an almanac of imaginary things, includes numerous illustrations of figures composed entirely of extremities. Drawing freely on art history, mythology, radical psychology, personal narrative and invention, Steyn's work proposes an eccentric synthesis of abjection and imaginative pleasure.
• Sean O'Toole

Marlene Steyn Born 1989, Cape Town, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'You Cant Cry When Your Head Is Underwater', Lychee One, London; 'Your Skin Is Not The Best Hiding Place', SMAC Gallery Cape Town; 'The End is Located Underneath Her Third Armpit (if the muscle is flexed)', Commune.1, Cape Town; 2015 – 'Mad Love', Lychee One, London; 2014 – 'How Cannibals Cuddle', Cabin Gallery, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – Lychee One, London; 2016 – 'Break the Spell', GUS Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa; 'Paper, publication, performance', Lychee One, London; 'New Monuments', Commune.1, Cape Town; 'Across the Divide', Rosenfeld Porcini, London; 'Inside Out', Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, UK; 'Faces & Other Scenarios', Galerie d'Ys, Brussels; 'LUSH', SMAC Gallery Cape Town; 2015 – 'All she ever wanted to be', Galleria M, Kolkata, India.

Marlene Steyn



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- *Bad Hair Day Trinal*, 2016
  Oil on ceramic, wood
  75 × 31 × 17 cm
  (29 ½ × 12 ¼ × 2 ½ in)

- *The Scream (Echo-Oh's)*, 2016
  Oil on ceramic, wood
  Front: 37 × 22 × 10 cm
  (14 ⅝ × 8 ⅝ × 3 ⅞ in)

- *Becoming a braid (All she ever wanted to be)*, 2013
  Fired earthenware clay painted with oil, acrylic and enamel
  31 × 14 × 7.5 cm
  (12 ¼ × 5 ½ × 2 in)





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Rosemarie Trockel's practice is protean by nature, seemingly ever changing. Working across a variety of media, the artist draws upon topics as diverse as zoology, botany, gender concerns, sexuality and ecology. Active since the 1970s, Trockel is a polymath who has influenced generations of artists. Taken separately, each work is a type of vignette, which when installed collectively, forms a lyrical, if oblique, narrative. She is drawn to materials that have resonances beyond art history, mixing craft, design and amateur aesthetics to dissolve distinctions between high and low culture.

Trockel's interest in materials such as ceramic and wool owes as much to their evocation of domestic and feminized labour as to their physical properties. While her work typically resists direct representation, her use of abstraction is never purely formal. For instance, the work *Shutter* (2006) has a series of vertical and horizontal lines incised into the surface of the glistening red ceramic slab. The lines can be read as representational – evoking a window shutter – or as an abstraction, recalling the geometric motifs of mid-century modernism. On closer inspection, we realize that the work is actually cast from a piece of raw meat; the delicacy of the material is countered by something more aggressive or repulsive. Trockel merges a Surrealist ability to juxtapose unexpected elements with a more formalist and abstract sensibility.

Trockel's suggestive materialism can be placed within a lineage of what the curator and writer Lucy Lippard has termed 'Eccentric Abstraction', aligning a group of artists, including Eva Hesse (1936–70), Lynda Benglis (pp.34–5) and Robert Morris (b.1931), who foreground soft and pliable materials that conflate seriality and abstraction with references to nature and the body. Trockel's superlative handling of ceramic can simultaneously make it look vegetal and mineral – the surfaces resulting from natural, as much as human action. Works such as *Magma* (2008) look like they've been excavated from under the studio, rather than made by the artist in it. While Trockel's ceramics can be viewed singularly, they are often displayed in larger installations that recall cabinets of curiosities. The artist regularly places found and made objects in vitrines to form a type of personal museology. Connecting disparate forms of knowledge and research, the installations suggest a complex relationship between human and nonhuman agents. It can take time and patience to grasp the particular tenor of Trockel's itinerant work – yet, like all great art, it returns us the world in new and unexpected ways. • George Vasey



Rosemarie Trockel Born 1952, Schwerte, Germany. Lives and works in Cologne, Germany. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Reflections / Riflessioni', Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin, Italy; 2015 – 'Rosemarie Trockel. Märzôschnee ûnd Wiebôrweh sand am Môargô niana më', Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria; 2014 – 'Rosemarie Trockel. Less Sauvage than Others', Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; 2013 – 'Rosemarie Trockel. A Cosmos', Serpentine Gallery, London; 'Rosemarie Trockel, Flagrant Delight', Museion Bolzano, Italy; 2012 – 'Rosemarie Trockel. A Cosmos', New Museum, New York, and touring to Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; 'Rosemarie Trockel: Flagrant Delight', Wiels, Brussels. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Question of the Wall itself', Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; 'Wir nennen es Ludwig', Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; 2015 – 'Ruhe vor dem Sturm. Postminimalistische Kunst aus dem Rheinland', Museum Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany; 'The Great Mother', Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Palazzo Reale, Milan; 2014 – 'Burning Down the House', 10th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea; 2012 – dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany.

Rosemarie Trockel

† *Magma*, 2008
Ceramic, glazed (blue, white, redbrown, beige, black)
77 × 68 × 21 cm
(30¼ × 26¾ × 8¼ in)

→ *Shutter*, 2006
Ceramics, glazed
100 × 77 × 11 cm
(39⅜ × 30¼ × 4⅓ in)

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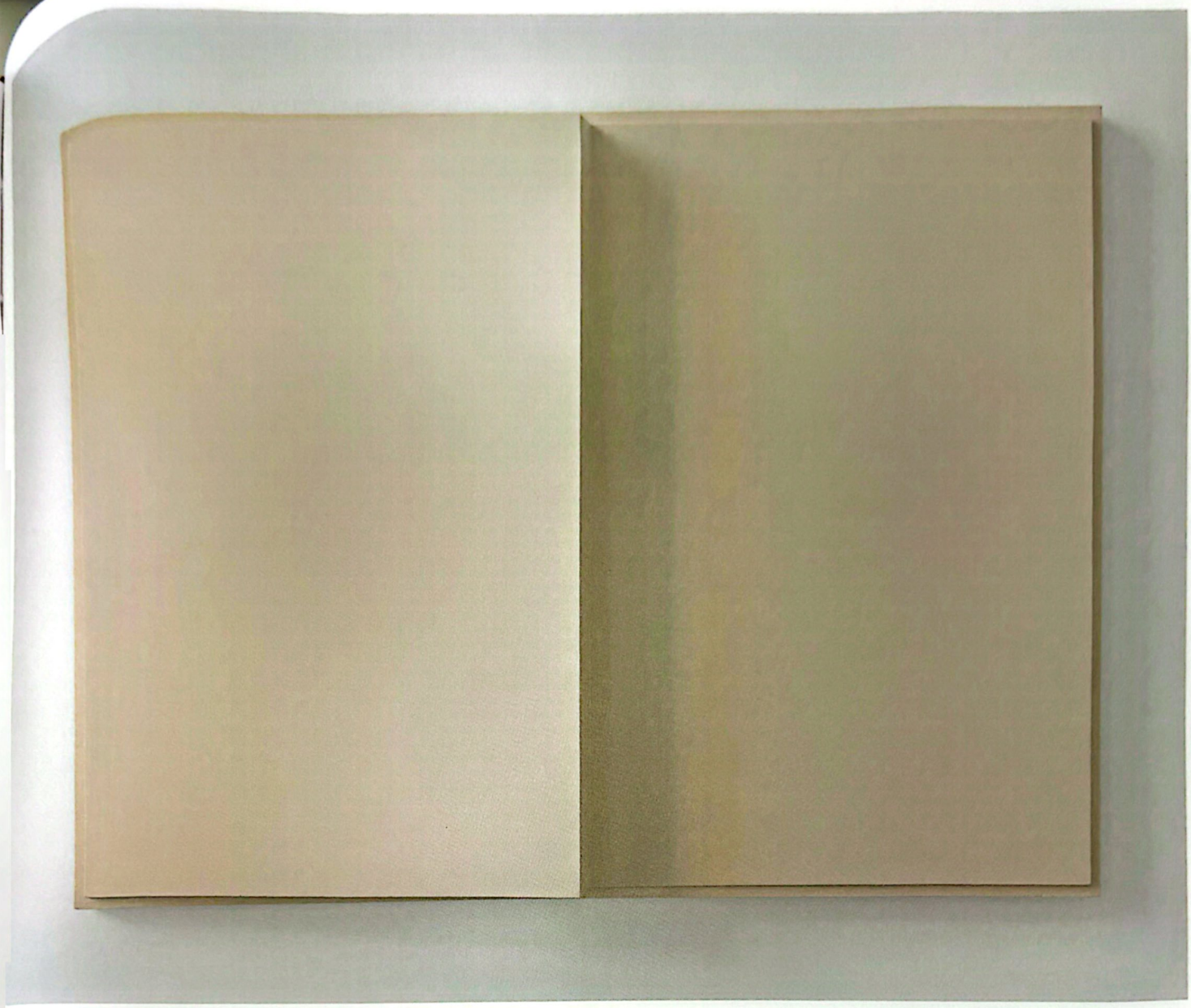

Aroma, 2014
Ceramics, glazed, two parts
60 × 37 × 24 cm
(23 ¼ × 23 ¼ × 9 ½ in)

Training, 2011
Ceramics, PU-finish
60 × 90 × 10.5
(23 ¼ × 35 ½ × 4 ¼ in)

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For Clare Twomey, clay is a material 'deeply embedded in human existence' that has enabled communities of yesteryear to perform the ritual functions of drinking, storing, carrying and sharing precious contents. Today, that familiarity extends to the mass-produced: most of us have purchased, touched or broken kitchen tiles, museum shop trinkets and commemorative coffee mugs. Clay, then, is a democratic material, a fact Twomey exploits by staging viewers' direct encounter with it to prompt rumination on such social and cultural processes as exchange, consumption, memory, preservation and desire.

Twomey's clay takes various forms – unfired, powdered, slip cast, factory produced – and hews to no unifying aesthetic. Her post-studio work is instead driven by the historic conditions of its exhibition site. Among her most renowned artworks are those directly involving viewer interactivity, an artistic gesture that implicates the beholder/participant in a complex matrix of negotiation between desire, responsibility and possession. Such was the case in *Trophy* (2006): Twomey scattered four thousand unglazed ceramic birds, small enough to cradle in one's hand, across the Victoria & Albert Museum's Cast Courts. Both the site and the objects' material – she collaborated with the Wedgwood factory to produce them in their trademark Jasper blue hues – implied the figurines' worth, each a titular 'trophy'. While individual gain contributed to the gradual dismantling of the installation as a whole as visitors took away individual birds, Twomey encouraged their new owners to send her photographs of these souvenir bluebirds installed in their own homes. She thereby substituted participatory encounter for the museum environment's assumed subject-object relationship, such that the work persisted through verbal and photographic feedback loops in a world far beyond the gallery's walls.

In *Forever* (2010) Twomey probed even further the responsibility of owning – and thus perpetually conserving – a precious object. Viewers invited to take a replica of Kansas's Nelson-Atkins Museum's famous Sandbach cup also signed a Deed that concretized the otherwise abstract notion of 'forever' by legally binding them to care for the cup in perpetuity. In emphasizing and challenging a culture of conspicuous consumption, Twomey exposes its costs in waste and human labour. *Manifest: 10,000 Hours* (2015) alluded to the time ostensibly required to master a skill, while *Monument* (2009), a towering pile of imperfect or damaged ceramic pieces, recalibrated notions of value by memorializing by-products otherwise destined for subterranean junkyards. Twomey has signalled her investment in shifting 'from a culture of objects and collecting to one of collective thought and action', and fluently uses clay to ensnare us in situations that render tangible the invisible impulses governing human behaviour. In so doing, her work feels personal – aimed directly at *us* – perhaps, indeed, the only position from which we might be compelled to act.

• Elizabeth Buhe



Clare Twomey Born 1968, Ipswich, Suffolk, UK. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – 'Lead Artist Tate Exchange', Tate Modern, London; 'Wuthering Heights – a manuscript', Bronte Parsonage Museum, Keighley, UK; 2016 – 'Time Present. Time Past', William Morris Gallery, London; 'Humanity Is In Our Hands', Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, London; 2015 – 'Manifest: 10,000 hours', York Art Gallery, UK; 2015 – 'Piece by Piece', Gardiner Museum Toronto; 2013 – 'Exchange', The Foundling Museum, London; 'Marking the Line', Sir John Soanes Museum, London. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2011 – 'Rotor', Siobhan Davies, London; 'Ceramics in Contemporary Art', GI Holdegard, Denmark; 2008 'Jerwood Contemporary Makers', Jerwood Visual Arts, London; 2007 – 'Think Tank', Contemporary Applied Arts, London; 2006 – 'White Spirit', Foundation Bernardaud, Limoges, France; 2004 – 'A Secret History of Clay', Tate Liverpool, UK; 2002 – 'Gun Show', Soil Gallery, Seattle; 'Guns and Roses', Transit, London; 2001 – '1st World Ceramic Biennale Korea', Gyeonggi Province, South Korea.

↑ *Monument*, 2009
Found ceramics
Installation view, mima Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK

↗ *Manifest: 10,000 hours*, 2015
Installation view, York Art Gallery, UK

→ *Forever*, 2010
Installation view, Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri

Clare Twomey



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Although Francis Upritchard's sculpture defies categorization, her work is distinguished by a singular and easily identifiable effect: she creates objects that are profoundly uncanny. Combining the familiar with the strange, her works are invested with a discomfiting power that we are more apt to associate with instruments of the occult than domestic design objects, or the works we expect to encounter in a contemporary art gallery.

Take, for instance, her 2003 series of canopic urns, the zoomorphic vessels in which ancient Egyptians preserved the embalmed organs of the dead, reimagined by the artist using hand-glazed domestic pots and vases sourced from bric-a-brac sales. The transformation of these kitschy relics of the 1970s popular craft boom into vehicles for the transportation of a king's viscera across the boundary between life and death exemplifies the artist's capacity to make weird what is otherwise mundane. As well as inspiring an unsettling mixture of attraction and revulsion, the works upend the standard means by which objects intended to serve a practical purpose accrue value as they move across eras and civilizations. We are asked to consider our tendency to revere, and transfer to museums, objects whose practical use depends on systems of knowledge that are obscure to us.

The same talismanic qualities are particularly evident in Upritchard's recent ceramics, which attribute rudimentary human features to lamps, cups and tankards. *Shiny Face* (2015), on which Upritchard collaborated with the New Zealand potter Nicholas Brandon, is a twin lamp adorned by two soda-fired ceramic lampshades with eyes, mouth and nose picked out on the surface. The fear that inanimate objects are possessed of a consciousness that they keep hidden from humans has a long tradition in culture, from shamanic practices to Pixar Animation's *Toy Story*. Yet that a lamp should have eyes also seems – like a revision of the paranoid assertion that 'the walls have ears' – appropriate in an era of constant surveillance.

The similarly blank expressions depicted on Upritchard's animistic *White Tankards* (2014) are redolent of Greek theatre masks. Indeed there is much about her work that feels theatrical, in the same sense that censers and candlesticks are props in the performance of a religious ceremony. Even the ceramic earthenware pots inscribed with faces call to mind the mescal cups made by Californian ceramicist J.B. Blunk, reminders that the social practice of eating and drinking is itself heavily ritualized. Upritchard's work resists the separation of art from life by alerting us to the ceremonies in which we take part every day. • Ben Eastham





Francis Upritchard Born 1976 New Plymouth, New Zealand. Lives and works in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Jealous Saboteurs', Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia and touring to City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand; 2014 – 'Francis Upritchard', Hammer Projects, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'Do What You Will', Children's Commission at Whitechapel Gallery, London; 2013 – 'Mandrake', The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin; 2012 – 'A Hand of Cards', Nottingham Contemporary, UK; 'A Long Wait', Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio; 2011 – 'Echo', Amersfoort Kunsthal, Netherlands; 2010 – 'In die Höhle', Wiener Secession, Vienna; 2009 – 'Save Yourself', New Zealand Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Making & Unmaking', Camden Arts Centre, London; 'The Neighbour', Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington; 'Young Potters', The Young, Wellington; 2015 – 'Summer of Art', Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, Christchurch, New Zealand; 'Ulla von Brandenburg, Haris Epaminonda & Francis Upritchard', Galerie Art Concept, Paris; 'Dead', Saatchi Gallery, London; 'STATION TO STATION: A 30 Day Happening', Barbican Centre, London; 2014 – 'HOUSE PARTY with Dzek', Kate MacGarry, London.

Francis Upritchard

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↖↖ *Hatched Brown Lamp*, 2015
Wood-fired ceramic, brass, steel, lighting components
83 × 96 × 38 cm
(32¾ × 37¾ × 14 in)

↖ *White Tankards*, 2014
Wood-fired stoneware
Various dimensions

↑ *Hari's Urns*, 2004–06
Ceramic, modelling material, paint
Variable dimensions

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Adrián Villar Rojas has executed numerous large-scale installations and sculptures in cities including Buenos Aires, Venice, Istanbul, New York and Marrakech. Many of these sculptures are made out of clay and evoke an uncanny atmosphere. Reminiscent of fossils from an indefinite past, or symbols of an imaginary future, their amalgamated forms are at once reflective of science fiction and the post-apocalyptic. They allude to the anthropocene – the role of man upon Earth, his economy of labour and battle with time and nature. Ultimately, they obsessively question death and our existence in relation to the dual elements of time and space. They themselves decay and disappear, leaving crumbling material remains. Set in calm, natural surroundings, these sculptures usually loom eerily over the viewer or, alternatively, are grouped amid the surrounding debris of dead matter. Villar Rojas roams the world like a nomad and operates with a team of collaborators from his home city of Rosario in Argentina. Together they enter these new locales to create site-specific works that use familiar, local materials to elicit more universal, existential themes.

In his early career, Villar Rojas produced a work for the Bienal del Fin del Mundo in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina; entitled *My dead family* (2009), it took the form of a twenty-eight metre (ninety-two foot) whale made from unfired clay, lying in a forest of Araucan beech trees. This monumental structure was left to decompose in its hostile surroundings. As an artist who himself grew up in a developing economy, Villar Rojas's choice to employ local labour and expertise in the execution of his sculptures is a considered one, highlighting the relationship between the material remains of his works and the local environment in which they are placed.

Representing his country at the Venice Biennale in 2011, he filled the Argentinian Pavilion with the installation *Now I will be with my son, the murderer of your heritage* (2011). For this work he created a series of mammoth column-like monuments, sprouting from the ground and comprising clay, cement, burlap and wood. Together they appeared alien or supernatural, fusing machine with animal and nature. In his own distinct version of science fiction, the artist looked beyond a human understanding of time, employing a language of 'multiverses' where total extinction is part of life.

For the sixth edition of the Marrakech Biennale in 2016, the ever-prolific Villar Rojas produced the film *Unknown Soldier* (2016). Shot in slow motion, it depicted scenes from his travels to various towns near Marrakech, where he encountered various craftsmen and makers. The film's imagery focuses on their hands as they mould clay or wash away food from earthenware dishes fabricated to look like fossils. The sequences unfold like a series of still- life paintings of pots, bones, fruits and living animals – indeed, the artist originally trained as a painter. In his film, still life – *nature morte* in French meaning literally 'dead nature' – is shown as alive in the hands of these local makers, who, along with the clay, have unearthed a timeless sense of peace and serenity. • Reem Fada

Adrián Villar Rojas Born 1980, Rosario, Argentina. Lives and works nomadically. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – 'Rinascimento', Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; 'Two Suns', Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; 'Fantasma', Moderna Museet, Stockholm; 2014 – 'The Evolution of God', High Line at the Rail Yards, New York; 'Los Teatros de Saturno' ('The Theaters of Saturn'), kurimanzutto, Mexico City; 2013 – 'Films Before Revolution', Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich; 'Today We Reboot the Planet', Serpentine Galleries, London; 'The Work of the Ocean', Foundation 11 Lijnen, Belgium; 2012 – 'Before My Birth', Arts Brookfield with the New Museum, World Financial Center Plaza, New York; 2011 – 'Poems for Earthlings', SAM ART Projects, the Louvre Museum, Paris; 'ILLUMInations', Argentina Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 14th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey; Sharjah Biennial 12, United Arab Emirates; 2014 – Foundation Louis Vuitton, Paris; ' Real DMZ Project 2014', Yangji-ri Village, South Korea; 2013 – 'EXPO 1: New York', MoMA PS1; 5th Moscow Biennale; 2012 – 39th Shanghai Biennale; dOCUMENTA(13), Kassel, Germany and Kabul, Afghanistan; 'The Ungovernables', New Museum Triennial, New York; 2011 – 12th Istanbul Biennial.

Adrián Villar Rojas





↑ *Mi familia muerta (My dead family)*, 2009
Wood, rocks and clay
Site specific sculpture:
3 × 2.7 × 4 m
(118 ⅛ in × 88 ft 7 in × 157 ½ in)
'End of The World Biennale: 2nd Edition', Ushuaia, Argentina

→ *Ahora estaré con mi hija, el asesino de tu herencia (Now I will be with my son, the murderer of your heritage)*, 2011
Clay (unfired), cement, burlap and wood
Site specific installation
Argentine Pavilion,
54th Venice Biennale

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Jesse Wine's reliefs, vessels and tableau-like scenes explore process, colour and form, testing the potential of clay as a responsive, sculptural material. His approach to making leaves much to chance: he experiments with traditional glazing and firing techniques and embraces the possibility of error and uncertainty. The results are often unstable; colours melt and blend and structures collapse, the surfaces of the sculptures are brittle and uneven with glazes that flake and crack.

Wine's playful ceramic objects and still lifes give form to the peculiarities and rituals of the everyday, drawing on our shared experiences. His lopsided and crumpled empty vessels are often finished with oxidized rust or shiny metallic glazes; misshapen heads wear mischievous expressions, with contorted faces and tongues poking out. Works such as the *travelling white man* (2013–14) and *Jesse show passion* (2014) series sport modern accessories, belts, beanies and bobble hats. Others are less figurative, with textured and gnarly surfaces and densely layered colours that dribble and pool. His objects have a cartoon-like quality – platters of food, giant drinking vessels, a teetering pile of books – and combine to form larger installations.

Wine's trilogy of works *Young man red I–III* (2014) recreates episodes from the artist's daily life with oversized ceramic puppets and props and in so doing poses questions around identity and self-image. Suspended from the ceiling, the puppets act out everyday activities: making work in the studio, eating lunch, choosing the right sports shoes to wear. Comprising a hat, gilet, shorts, hands, legs and feet, these partial, disembodied self-portraits hover over low platforms. The props complete the narrative and animate each scene: scaled-up bags of clay, scalpels, a rolling pin, a half-finished sculpture; a bottle of wine and a discarded lunch; a selection of the artist's favourite slides and Reebok Classics. Dramatically lit, like a theatrical set, the works recall Alexander Calder's mobiles or museum dioramas.

A more recent ensemble, *After awhile you could get used to anything* (2016) presents strange Surrealist re-imaginings of a classical scene, with carefully arranged objects alluding to museological displays of artefacts or relics. Wine's installation *Working title, not sure yet* (2016), deconstructs bodily form and investigates the degradation of materials using fired and unfired clay. Rusty body parts – a dismembered foot, half a leg, a saggy glove – are floating in space or pinned to the wall.

Wine also pays homage to other artists by creating replicas of their works – among them Peter Voulkos, Ken Price and John Mason, who shifted the conception of ceramics as purely functional to an experimental medium and were at the centre of California's flourishing art scene in the 1950s and 1960s. Encouraging a dialogue between past and present, Wine adopts their approaches and methods and remakes their sculptures as an ongoing part of his practice. The work of these artists remains a frame of reference to which he continually returns.

• Emma Dean





Jesse Wine Born 1983, Chester, UK. Lives and works in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – 'Working title, not sure yet', Mary Mary, Glasgow; 'Sludgy Portrait of Himself', Museum of Cambridge, UK; 2014 – 'Young man red', BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK, and touring to Gemeentemuseum, Den Haag, Netherlands. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2017 – 'That Continuous Thing: Artists and the Ceramic Studio, 1920 – Today', Tate St Ives, Cornwall, UK; 2016 – 'Looking North', Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK; 'Luster – Clay in Sculpture Today', Fundament Foundation, Tilburg, Netherlands; 'Material Language', New Art Centre, Roche Court, UK; 'Sorcières et Escargots', Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival, Switzerland; 'British Art Show 8', Leeds City Art Gallery, UK, and touring to Inverleith House, Edinburgh; 'Paul Heyer, Jeanette Mundt, Jesse Wine', Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; 'Gesture Play', Simone Subal Gallery, New York.

Jesse Wine

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↖ *Young man red I* [detail], 2014
Glazed ceramic, steel
Variable dimensions

← *If you're not turning, you're burning I*, 2016
Glazed ceramic
10 × 22 × 15 cm
(4 × 8 ½ × 6 in)

↑ *Young man red I*, 2014
Glazed ceramic, steel
Variable dimensions
Installation view, 'Young Man Red' exhibition, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK, 2014–15

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- *After awhile you could get used to anything*, 2016
  Glazed ceramic, steel
  109.2 × 173.4 × 68.3 cm
  (43 × 68 ¼ × 26 ⅞ in)
- Installation view, 'Working title, not sure yet' exhibition, Mary Mary, Glasgow, 2016



esse Wine

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Known as a pioneer who resisted more conventional approaches to ceramics, with a passionate tenacity to explore her medium, for over sixty years Betty Woodman has investigated a variety of techniques to transform clay. At the beginning of her career in the 1950s, what she made was considered craft in opposition to art, but her inventive approach transformed her sensibility, while influencing others, changing the very definition of 'ceramics'. Before her important 2016 exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London (her first solo presentation in the UK), Woodman had a major retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2006, the first given to a living female artist. Distilling the techniques of clay and kiln firing, Woodman experiments with how the medium intersects with ideas of sculptural form and the art object through questioning conceptual ideas about pots, a universal form that permeates human history.

Woodman has claimed inspiration from Greek, Etruscan and Roman vessels, as well as eighteenth-century porcelain, Chinese Tang dynasty pottery and Japanese Oribe pottery, but she also makes reference to painters ranging from Fra Angelico to Picasso. She believes in material and process as primary and will use whatever is necessary to realize her vision.

Domestic spaces have inspired and been transformed by Woodman's sculptural works, while also contextualizing her clay structures in an intimate situation. Using bold and vibrant colours, she has explored the shape of utilitarian forms such as the vase, but has increasingly become more abstract, producing objects that are related more to a Bonnard painting or a Matisse cutout, referencing the calligraphic quality of the latter's linear shapes. By indicating the domestic, she reflects an emotional state and perspective on the world. *Aeolian Pyramid* (2001/2006) is a phalanx of intrepid vase-like forms, painted with partial depictions of vases and made in misshapen and mismatched combinations. This assemblage of distorted vessels is organized into an orderly pyramid with each row of elements receding from a bulkier array to a slimmer form at top.

The Summer House (2015) is a radical three-dimensional composition where Woodman emphasizes the act of painting in an elongated wall work that incorporates salvage culture by incorporating shards from around her studio. Exuberantly colourful, such works integrate acrylic on canvas with glazed earthenware, depicting a domestic interior as flat and dimensional. The table is skewed at an angle and holds several pieces of pottery not necessarily arranged, but very present. A window and a door open onto, and seem to incorporate, the interior landscape, engaging the tension between two- and three-dimensionality in art. Woodman has famously accentuated decorative patterns making her surfaces into paintings. Above all, she disrupts conventions, while highlighting the scope of what can be achieved with ceramics as a sculptural and painterly engagement.

• Kathleen Madden

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etty Woodman Born 1930, Norwalk, Connecticut. Lives nd works in New York and Antella, Italy. Selected Solo xhibitions: 2016 – 'Breakfast At The Seashore Lunch Antella', Salon 94 Bowery, New York; 'Theatre of the omestic', ICA, London; 2015 – Museo Marino Marini, orence; 'Illusions of Domesticity', David Kordansky, s Angeles; 2014 – 'Interior Views', Galerie Francesca Pia, irich; 2013 – 'Of Botticelli', Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, rlin; 2011 – 'Places, Spaces and Things', Gardiner useum, Toronto; 2006 – 'The Art of Betty Woodman', e Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; 'Theatres Betty Woodman', Ariana Museum, Geneva, and touring Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon. Selected Group ibitions: 2017 – 'Regarding George Ohr: Contemporary in the Spirit of the Mad Potter', Boca Raton Museum rt, Boca Raton, Florida; 2016 – 'Liverpool Biennial', UK; Natural Flow of Things', La Casa Encendida, Madrid; – '1st Bienial Internacional de Arte Contemporaneo tagena de Indias', Colombia; 2012 – 'Playing House', oklyn Museum, New York; 2011 – 'Postmodernism: Style Subversion, 1970–1990', Victoria & Albert Museum, don; 'Paul Clay', Salon 94, New York; 2009 – 'Dirt elight: Impulses that Form Clay', ICA, Philadelphia, touring to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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ty Woodman



↑ *The Kitchen Table*, 2014
Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, acrylic paint, canvas, wood
160 × 152.4 × 31.8 cm
(63 × 60 × 12½ in)

↗ *Wallpaper #7*, 2014
Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, acrylic paint,
58 individual elements
182.9 × 228.6 cm
(72 × 90 in)

→ *Aeolian Pyramid*, 2001/2006
Glazed earthenware, wood, paint
381 × 426.7 × 254 cm
(150 × 168 × 100 in)

→→ Overleaf:
The Summer House, 2015
Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, acrylic paint, canvas, wood
859.8 × 240 × 30.5 cm
(338 ⅛ × 94 ½ × 12 in)
Installation view, ICA, London, 2016

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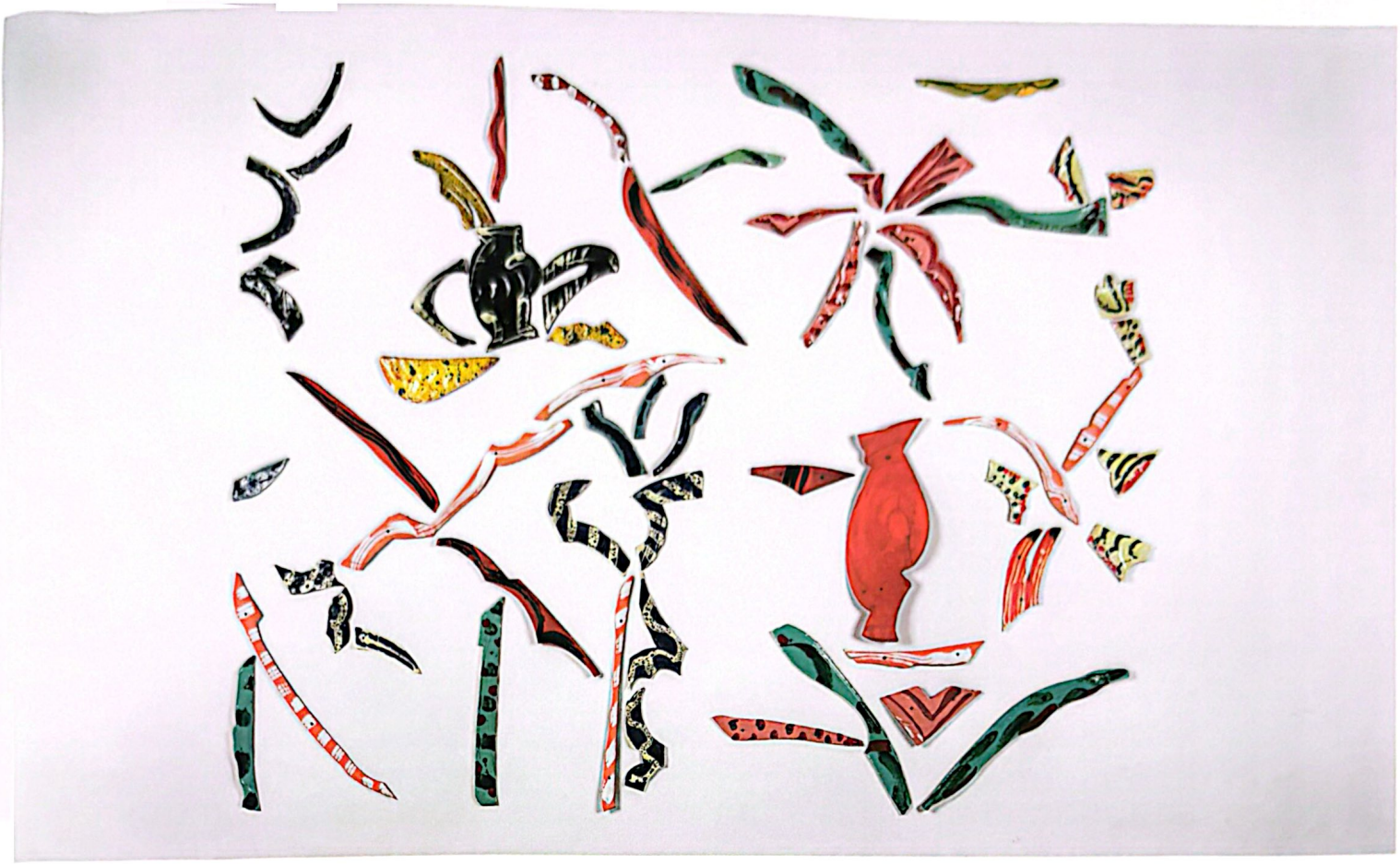



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In her landmark series entitled *Translated Vases*, Korean artist Yeesookyung created sculptures by combining discarded shards of porcelain, assembling them to make new forms and fusing them with gold leaf. The resulting works are often organic in shape, resembling soap bubbles or other biomorphic forms. Begun in 2002, this ongoing series represents a ceramic practice that benefits from productive failure. The artist collects broken shards from artisans who work in Korea replicating historical vessels from the Goryeo (918–1392) and Joseon (1392–1897) dynasties. As a measure of the high production value and detailed replication of these historical precedents, the master potters reject any piece that bears even the smallest sign of inferior quality. Approximately seventy per cent of what a master fires will be discarded after baking in the kiln. Yee appropriates these cast-off porcelain pieces, knowingly aware of Western ideas around the ready-made and appropriation, incorporating the shards into her production in a form of unwitting collaboration with the master potters. This process functions in much the same way as an author who cites from other sources in an academic publication to substantiate and make relevant her own interpretation and assertions. By 'translating' these porcelain elements, Yee highlights the fragility and imperfections of human existence as well as the inevitable failure of any attempt to construct historic continuity.

Out of the defective shards, Yee generates elegant and graceful sculptures, shape-shifters of precariousness that present anatomical suggestions of supple flesh and corpulent bodies. One might spot the bulbous shape of a cup emerging, recognizable from a delicate decorated handle, but these no longer serve the purpose for which they were originally made; Yee transforms them into objects without a function, their impact greater than the sum of their parts.

Yee adds touches of 24-carat gold along the broken and re-sutured joints in these re-articulations of other people's efforts, to suggest traces of opulence. She has explained that the Korean word *geum* is translated to mean both 'crack' and 'gold'. Held together with epoxy, the joins could be entirely invisible, yet Yee applies the gold as a deliberate reference to the Japanese tradition of *kintsugi*, the art of mending broken pottery with lacquer and gold. This tradition values and respects the imperfect, repairing but not hiding the flaws, and ultimately makes the object more prized through the addition of a precious substance that heightens the beauty of the damaged object instead of rejecting and discarding imperfection.

In Yee's translations, patterns in celadon green and other colours that look like verdigris or variations of white clash as the artist contrasts various broken designs; in places a dragon's head or other identifiable fragment might emerge through the confusion. Yet, through her precise intermingling and sensibility for overall surface pattern, Yee demonstrates an economy of means that unifies many vessels and techniques into a new object, assimilating their many disparate narratives to create a new one of her own. • Kathleen Madden



† *Translated Vase, (TVWG1)*, 2013
Ceramic shards, epoxy,
24-karat gold leaf
156.2 × 91.4 × 69.9 cm
(61½ × 36 × 27½ in)

→ *Translated Vase, (TVW2)*, 2013
Ceramic shards, epoxy,
24-karat gold leaf
129.5 × 95.3 × 90.2 cm
(51 × 37½ × 35 ½ in)

Yeesookyung Born 1963, Seoul, South Korea. Lives and works in Seoul. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2017 – Locks Gallery, Philadelphia; 2015 – 'Contemporary Korean Sculpture', Asia Society Texas Center, Houston; 'Saint Breeders', Atelier Hermès, Seoul; 'When I Become You', Daegu Art Museum, South Korea; 'When I Become You, Yeesookyung in Taipei', MOCA Taipei, Taiwan; 2014 – 'The Cleaning of Time', Locks Gallery, Philadelphia; 'Take Me Home Country Roads', Space Willing N Dealing, Seoul; 2013 – 'Flame', Ota Fine Arts, Singapore; 2012 – Sindoh Art Gallery, Seoul. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'MMCA Gwacheon, 30 Years 1986–2016', National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea; 'Born in Flames: Korean Ceramics from the National Museum of Korea', The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; 'When Words Fail', HITE Collection, Seoul; 'Makers-The Way of Living in Transition / Asia Contemporary Art Links', Gallery 1 at the Gwangju Biennale Hall, South Korea; 'Earth, Fire, Soul – Masterpieces of Korean Ceramics', Salon d'Honneur at the Grand Palais, Paris; 'Art from Elsewhere', Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, and touring to Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, UK; 'Motions', Ota Fine Arts, Singapore.

Yeesookyung



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