



# Beyond the Vessel

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE



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Narratives in Contemporary European Ceramics

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# Material narrative

## The inherent eloquence of clay

Glen R. Brown

The plasticity of clay is key to its natural volubility: its inherent potential to speak materially and so to articulate narrative in the most elemental sense. An accommodating substance, clay moves easily under the energy of a compressive force, whether a disinterested force like gravity or one as motivated as the pressure of an artist's fingertips as they strive to impart meaning to the world. The ability of clay to hold the shapes that it acquires under the influence of such forces makes it a faithful chronicler of events in a story of creation: a record of the physical genesis of form. Material narrative comes to clay so readily that some who work intimately with the medium feel obliged to allow it a significant degree of self-determination after imposing upon it only the rudiments of form. (Such restraint on the part of the maker in deference to the inherent narrative inclinations of clay is typical of some phases of the Japanese ceramic tradition, for example.) Other makers take the opposite tack, treating clay as a malleable tabula rasa on which to inscribe the full content of their intentionality. Clay has no preference between these polarities; it is amenable to any position on a spectrum from assertive presence to obedient vehicle, from material narrative to content narrative.

In the service of art, clay typically carries multiple, simultaneous narratives that relate to one another in ways

calculated to compound meaning. Stories of transition between material states are unmotivated, fortuitous, arising from the natural tendency of clay to respond to the forces that act upon it, but they can be anticipated and even encouraged by the artist for aesthetic or discursive purposes. The result of such encouragement often appears more like a negotiation between clay and maker than an imperious forcing of the artist's will upon a submissive medium.

Gravity and shrinkage – the latter of which can leave fine networks of fissures in the surface of clay while in the drying stage or even tear gapping wounds in that surface if the drying process is rushed – are two frequent instigators of unmotivated material narratives in ceramics. Their traces relate stories of creation that assert the independence of clay from absolute human control. More common as factors in this mode of material narrative are the consequences of kiln atmospheres, particularly those generated by wood-fired kilns. Flashing – a range of visual surface effects that arise chiefly from differences in oxygen levels as raw clay is transformed into ceramic through heat – and natural glazing, as wood ash settles on clay surfaces and vitrifies, were historically the most common atmospheric influences on material narrative. That these are not represented among the works of the exhibition can in part be attributed to the prevalence of gas and electric kilns today, but, more

important, it may also signal a desire among many of the artists to move symbolically as well as literally beyond the vessel, to distance their work from the associations of clay with craft and its historical technologies, particularly the making of functional pottery in wood-fired kilns.

It should be noted that one of the most significant sources of material narrative in both historical and contemporary ceramics does not involve clay at all, except as a kind of stage for the actions of another material altogether. Glaze, a vitreous substance, has been employed since antiquity, to seal the porous walls of earthenware vessels and to enhance the aesthetic appeal of objects produced in all clay bodies. Glazes, particularly lead-based glazes, tend to flow as they melt during firing, creating visual effects more liquid than solid, more active than static. In the finished object, each gleaming rivulet of glaze is a record of a descending migration and each glistening drip marks the point at which molten glass cooled and thickened sufficiently to finally defy gravity. It is no coincidence that medieval Japanese connoisseurs of glaze often found in its effects intimations of the changing seasons. Glaze trails not only embody the physical traces of movement across space; they also materially record time.

In its raw state, clay serves naturally as a metaphor of the organic, evolving from molecules formed in a watery environment and remaining malleable only so long as that

vital relationship with water is maintained. Raw clay and the human body are alike in this respect, with the former typically containing about 30% water and the latter roughly 50%. Despite this kinship, human interaction with clay has almost always resulted in a kind of death of the material. The drying and firing process through which water is removed and clay is ultimately converted to ceramic eliminates the potential for growth that an additive medium naturally embodies, rendering a plastic material effectively inert. Ceramic objects can, of course, acquire a different kind of metaphorical life through utility, passing through time and space and interacting with their environment in ways that both respond to and transform it, but that is life largely in its experiential sense rather than its biological essence. Ceramics as a field has for the most part contented itself with metaphors of this relational sort, but artists not bound to the traditions of a discipline in which function has been an influential, even governing, concept for millennia have felt freer to explore the aesthetic and symbolic possibilities of raw clay. In the early 1970s, for example, California artist Jim Melchert performed his famous *Changes*, in which he dipped his head in clay slip and allowed it to dry into a crusty second skin, and in the 1990s New York artist Walter McConnell began a series of large, plastic-sheeted terrariums in which mounds of raw clay sculpted into landscapes established temporary biospheres through evaporation, condensation, and precipitation.

To use clay in this way is to do more than evade the term ceramic. It is to revise one of the oldest aphorisms in a long history of Western reflection on the nature of art: *ars longa* becomes *ars brevis*. As it dries, raw clay hardens and eventually sloughs away as dust, evoking the ephemerality of life in the singular: the life of an individual organism, whether a hyacinth or a human being. Raw clay from this perspective equates art and artist mortally rather than projecting the former into an infinite future as an undying surrogate of the latter. When Phoebe Cummings creates a narrative of nature in a raw-clay, site-specific installation she is aware from the outset that none of her efforts, not the mental exertion of envisioning a composition nor the physical labour of shaping the formless medium of clay into the mediated form of sculpture, will result in an enduring masterpiece, or even an artwork at all in the conventional sense. Raw clay differs temperamentally from stone, bronze, or steel. It is restless, constantly changing. Like the artist's own life, each of Cummings installations has a beginning and an end, but in between there is no point of completion. Between the initial masses of raw clay and the terminal masses into which the installation must inevitably be dismantled, there is

no stage at which one can say that a work is fully present, fully independent of a process of transformation. The artist ends her engagement of the material once her concept has been realised, but the material continues to transform, slowly desiccating until the day when it must be broken up and removed. Then, all that remains is an absence hinted at in memories, photographs and film. If there is melancholy in this mortality, there is also a message. Life in the singular is finite, and raw clay can reference this, but raw clay can also evoke life in the collective: the vitality that, like the nature that Cummings represents, transcends any single organism and endures beyond the unending stream of deaths. Raw clay may dry, shrink, and disintegrate into dust, but its remains can be recycled, reconstituted by the vital element of water, and returned to plasticity and the potential for creation.

This is, of course, not the case for clay as ceramic. Clay that has passed through the firing process has been deliberately removed from a cycle of change, has been chemically transformed through the burning off of carbon and sulfur, a breaking of bonds with molecular water, inversion of the crystalline structure of quartz, sintering of clay particles together, and, finally, vitrification of those elements capable of melting. Ceramic, particularly high-fired stoneware and porcelain, is more akin to marble—a metamorphic rock formed from sediment under intense heat and pressure – than anything organic. It is no accident that potsherds are the staples of archaeology; they endure across the ages, preserving their traces of human ingenuity and industry as persistently as documents in stone. Nevertheless, pottery, because it has infiltrated so many aspects of sociality, has acquired rhetorical associations with life. The most mundane evidence of this is reflected in the figurative terminology for the parts of a vessel – from foot to belly, shoulder, neck and mouth; less obvious, but more consequential, are the many ways in which humans have tended to reflect on the life of utilitarian ceramic objects in domestic service, to link them to rituals and rites of passage, and even to treat them as metonyms for those who possessed them in life.

That which can live must inevitably die, and this accounts in part for the power of expression in Bouke de Vries' *The Last Supper*, a towering icon of an atomic blast articulated through a detritus of defunct and dismembered ceramic vessels and figurines. Ceramic is a frangible material, prone to shattering when under tension. When a ceramic object breaks, each sherd rings forever with the traces of destruction. The sherds themselves recall a once-whole form that no longer exists, and in this respect conjure material narratives of violence and death. *The Last Supper*

employs this association in synergy with the representation of an atomic mushroom cloud to decry the use of high technology for the most terrifying of human intents: the mass destruction of human beings themselves. At the same time, De Vries' work is curiously complex, embodying antitheses in a metaphor of the cycle of life rather than simply emblematising death. If the shattered plates and figurines embody destruction, the process of composing them into a new and meaningful configuration is surely one of resurrection, as if the artist looked upon the fragments of ceramic ruin and posed the prophetic question, "Can these bones live?" De Vries, in fact, has made a career of sculpting through resurrection, of salvaging sherds and giving them new life in reconfiguration, sometimes by connecting them with Perspex rods and sometimes through the Japanese technique of *kintsugi*, in which the sherds of a broken vessel are reconnected with a mix of lacquer and gold dust that not only restores the vessel to wholeness but imparts to it a beauty of experience that exceeds that of any material perfection.

The slumping of wet clay in response to the influence of gravity, the trails left by a glaze as it flowed in molten liquidity over surfaces during the transformation of clay into ceramic, the shrinking and cracking of raw clay as it surrendered its moisture to the surrounding air, the sharp edges of a sherd once part of a larger, now dismembered, form – these are all factors in material narratives that could be called disinterested, unmotivated by anything but natural forces acting on material objects. Such naturally occurring narratives can be exploited to complement narratives of other sorts, but material narratives in clay can also be of a more obviously motivated character. The distinguishing factor is consciousness: the impact of human intention on the physical form of clay. The simplest of such motivated material narratives arise from the process of modeling by hand: an immediate transfer of energy from the artist's body to the clay body and a subsequent modification of the mass and surface of the medium at the artist's will. These kinds of narratives may be nothing more than an articulation of two discernable states or events and a moment, however brief, that links them in sequence: the maker's finger rested here, and then it was dragged across the surface to there, leaving a faint rill in the wet clay. Such overt material narratives of the process of making are primordial; they have a history that dates back roughly 30,000 years, when Neolithic fingers pinched clay near the fire pits of Dolni Vestonice in Central Europe. At the same time, much of the history of ceramics has been given to reducing or even eliminating altogether

these kinds of physical traces and the narratives of making that they convey. The cool perfection of Ching Dynasty imperial bowls, for example, seems to transcend the world in which human hands exert any influence over form, and the uniformity of product sought during the European Industrial Revolution gave rise to ceramic wares more evocative of machine technologies than the hand-working techniques of generations of previous potters.

Material narrative in clay never fully disappeared, despite the perfection of technologies for eliminating it, and in the second half of the twentieth century, it resurged as a deliberately cultivated trait diagnostic of modern ceramic art. It is no accident that this occurred at a time when material narratives in paint provided a sense of radical novelty for Abstract Expressionism. The drips in a Jackson Pollock painting, for example, each materially reflect the movement of the artist's body through space, and, in turn, adumbrate an internal struggle in which the artist's very identity hung in the balance. In the field of ceramics, the work of Peter Voulkos, the central protagonist in what has been called the California Revolution in Clay, helped to popularise motivated material narrative by introducing to clay the equivalent of Abstract Expressionist painting. Groping, slashing, and pummeling clay and leaving the evidence of this manipulation obtrusive in the finished form, Voulkos created massive platters and "stacks" that subverted the functional nature of the vessel – for all practical purposes rendering it sculptural – and asserted that clay was a natural medium for both material narrative and, through its connotative potential, expressive narrative.

The close relationship between these modes of narrative, the material and the expressive, is epitomised in *Beyond the Vessel* by the modeled sculptures of Jørgen Haugen Sørensen, which employ the idiom of fingers on a malleable surface to convey the testimony of a witness to the horrifying depths to which human nature can descend. Sørensen's closest precursor in terms of his material narratives is not Voulkos, a paragon in the ceramic tradition, but rather the sculptor Rodin, whose roughly modeled maquettes in clay are some of the most materially expressive representations ever to have been fashioned in art. Sørensen's *Justizia IV* reimagines the torment of Rodin's *Thinker*, situating a despondent figure on a plinth from which to contemplate not

a multitude of damned souls in the abyss of hell but rather a rising mountain of death manifesting a hell on earth. The rough marks of the artist's interaction with clay relate more than a story of physical creation: they convey a powerful impression of violence, a scraping and tearing of the clay body, that reflects the presumed actions behind the mound of cadavers, but also, and more important, embodying the turmoil of Sørensen's emotions while reflecting on the pervasiveness of brutality in the contemporary world. The deeply personal nature of the expression is confirmed, ironically, by the layer of glaze applied to the work as a kind of damper on the subjective. Wishing to create monuments testifying to the injustice still rampant in the contemporary world Sørensen enveloped his sculpture in a monochrome white with the intention of neutralising some of the visceral material effects and elevating the narrative from the personal level to that of the universal.

Intimacy with clay through the direct actions of the fingers, or simple tools that serve as prostheses of these and largely preserve the immediacy of touch, is the primary avenue by which motivated material narrative is generated in clay, but other strategies are at the artist's disposal as well. Christie Brown demonstrates that intentional storytelling in material terms is possible when using some of the very tools through which material narrative can be effectively reduced or even eliminated in the working of clay. Brown's sculptures are often assembled from combinations of handwork and mould-made forms. In general, moulds promote multiplicity rather than singularity; slipcast forms, for example, can be virtually indistinguishable from one another. Brown, however, utilises press moulds, or casting moulds, and takes particular interest in the physical deviations that can occur between multiples produced through this hands-on technology. Distended features, wrinkles, or cracks can arise and contribute materially to the formation of narratives when clay is removed from a press mould or when a moulded form is integrated into a larger composition. Like the traces of the incommensurable that some Surrealists found in simple details of surfaces – the veins of a leaf, or the raised grain of a wooden floor after countless scrubbings – material idiosyncrasies can be revelatory for Brown, whose most recent works reflect on the psychological implications of animal and human hybridity reflected in the persistence of

ancient European folk rites in which participants still don animal attributes in ritualistic regression to an intuitive, instinctive relationship with the world.

Under the influence of artists such as Voulkos, motivated material narrative gained immense popularity as a sign of modernist expression in the artistic working of clay in the third quarter of the twentieth century, but the logic of the avant-garde dictated that eventually this quality should itself be negated through subsequent revolution. Such negation occurred as early as the 1970s in the experiments of Richard Shaw with slipcasting, a technique selected deliberately to agitate the emotions of hands-on expressionist potters and sculptors. Shaw, and other artists such as Marilyn Levine, went on to perfect a genre of *trompe l'oeil* ceramics that shifted the emphasis from the material narratives of real objects fashioned from clay to the simulated material narratives of feigned objects merely represented by the works. Levine, for example, employed the natural fissuring of drying clay to convey the effect of cracking leather in her famous illusionistic renditions of handbags and briefcases, in effect directing the viewer to disregard actual material and the stories it bore of its own physical creation and focus instead on the simulation of such narratives. In this respect, material narrative became subtly fused with content narrative.

The Archimboldo-inspired allegorical heads of seasons created by Bertozzi & Casoni are *tours de force* of an ability to divert the viewer's attention from the actual materiality of ceramic and glaze to the illusion of material in a cornucopia-like abundance of ersatz fruits, vegetables, grains, and flowers in *Estate*. Here clay might begin to seem incidental, though certainly it is essential to the surprise aspect of *trompe l'oeil* art. These sculptures would, after all, provoke a significantly different response were they composed of organic objects rather than fired clay, since the ability to instigate moments of epiphany would be lost. Bertozzi & Casoni achieve the power of illusion, like all conjurers, not by true miracles of transformation but rather through diversion of the viewer's attention from the actual state of affairs, in this case the real materials comprising the allegorical heads. If this visual sleight of hand constitutes a significant evasion of the kinds of material narratives toward which clay is naturally inclined, it does not signify rejection of the

ceramic tradition. On the contrary, Bertozzi & Casoni seem to pay conscious homage to the *trompe l'oeil* ceramics of the famous sixteenth-century French craftsman Bernard Palissy, whose distinctive "rusticware" simulated organic reality not only through its moulded-from-life components of fish, snails, eels, frogs, snakes, and the like but also through its skillful employment of enamels to complete the picture of unadulterated nature. Bertozzi & Casoni may elaborate their narratives almost exclusively through content, but their works suggest a profound awareness of the history of ceramics as well as the general history of art.

Such awareness is reflected in the work of many ceramic artists today, just as many artists who work in clay maintain a deep appreciation for the narrative potential of the material. At the same time, contemporary ceramic art – whether in general or in the narrower sense of a discipline defined by a specific discourse and set of practices – often tendentiously separates itself from the history of ceramics and patently negates the material narrative natural to clay. The haunting *Moss People* of Kim Simonsson, for example, may be fashioned from stoneware, but the distinctive surfaces that link their materiality to their content – achieved through an accumulation of paint and nylon fiber – owe nothing to the material nature of clay. In fact, they camouflage it. That such substances as flocking, tool dip, fabric, and even sequins are regularly employed to cover every centimeter of surface in some contemporary ceramic sculptures only underscores the diversity of ways in which clay can be employed as a medium in art. In fact, with little difficulty one could construct a spectrum of contemporary works ranging from those in which clay as a material is eloquent and granted almost complete control over the narratives that it conveys to those in which clay as a material is rendered mute, its potential to elaborate material narratives entirely suppressed. While the relative position of a given work within such a spectrum would at one time would have carried definitive implications with regard to such categories as convention and rebellion or art and craft, today, as the varied work in *Beyond the Vessel* aptly attests, clay as a medium is arguably freer than it has ever been to simply facilitate creativity.

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# Narratives in Contemporary European Ceramics

Catherine Milner

“The universe is made of stories, not of atoms”

Muriel Rukeyser

For the past 50 years we have enjoyed a Machine Age. Scientific advances and the boom in technology have led us to value the digital and industrial over the handmade. The mobile phones that nestle in our pockets or the wafer-thin computers that sit on our laps give us access to a virtual world - the entire planet - at the push of a button and colossal amounts of data can be amassed in seconds to prove or disprove theories or to create arguments. Using technology, images can be manipulated to create new worlds and distinct forms of beauty. But in dwelling in these virtual worlds we have disconnected not only from each other, but from our bodily selves. Nowhere is this more evident than in contemporary art where the use of manufactured materials has triumphed over natural ones and the practice of making work with our hands.

Now, however, a new kind of art is emerging which is irreverent, playful, beautiful, forged out of that most elemental and ancient of materials; clay.

What this exhibition hopes to illustrate is what lies

beyond the vessel; meaning not only what lies beyond pots, cups and other utilitarian objects into which clay is often formed, but what lies beyond the vessel of our human bodies; namely our spirit and imagination and the art we create as the image of ourselves. It focuses on our need to explain to ourselves where we come from and how our beliefs emerged through myths but also to demonstrate, as Vivian van Blerk puts it: ‘The arbitrariness of life that dogs our every living hour.’

At a time when so many of us spend much of our time isolated from each other, gazing at the crystal screens of our cell phones like a myriad of miniature Narcissian pools, these stories have become more vital than ever, plunging us into a world of collective beliefs and reminding us of our common narratives.

Although they date back to the beginning of history; stories about the Cyclops, Medusa, Gaia and Zeus continue to resonate with us in the shape of the zombies, aliens and monsters that dominate our silver screens. More than 50 percent of the world’s population now live in cities, largely cut off from nature yet there is clearly a

yearning to be reconnected with the earth, a new kind of animism, through tales about spirits lurking in the forests or at the bottom of the sea, or under the eaves or in the sky.

Clay embodies this emerging sense of connection and is now being used both as a material to make art and also as a symbol of rootedness. It is anthropomorphic; close to us. A body.

It is also prevalent in the games that children play. Two years ago, the most common question tapped into Google’s search engine all over the world was ‘How do you make slime?’ This was borne of a still highly popular craze among children to make something physical, tactile and real, from flour, glue, hair conditioner, washing powder - anything they can lay their hands on at home. Is this not evidence of a thwarted human need to touch, feel and shape materials in a way that is not being met by prodding and swiping computer screens; a primeval need for the elemental, sensory gratification of moulding the most readily available substance around - the clods of earth beneath our feet?

Clay, as Grayson Perry once put it, is a ‘second-class material.’ Clay is inherently antiheroic, lending itself to an almost comic interpretation of what could otherwise be frightening. However, as this show proves, it is a first class means of visual communication and can also be the most sophisticated of materials. It responds to the simple pressure of a finger, confirming in a very basic way that we exist, that we have agency over our environment and can express our feelings in a silent but powerful language.

*Beyond the Vessel* presents two principal types of work; those inspired by the forests and dark tales of the North and those by Greek mythology. Biblical stories are also key; most notably in the works of Claire Curneen whose elegiac sculptures referencing imagery from the early Italian Renaissance, exude a gentle gravitas and calm. ‘Piero della Francesca’s *The Baptism of Christ* in the National Gallery has been a constant go-to reference for me’ she says. ‘It challenges every aspect of my being, a painting that is utterly beautiful and complex.’ Equally important is the *unheimlichkeit* or the uncanny; a German term suggesting the dark, secret and impenetrable worlds beyond our understanding.

Sigmund Freud viewed this as an all-sensory condition; he suggested that the characters who appeared in ancient stories and myths are merely manifestations of each of our different senses being stimulated one after the other. Christie Brown’s bleached figures that have eyeholes in the place of eyes are particularly *unheimlich*; they are stiff like some archaic kouroi and particularly effective in conjuring up a sense of eerie dissonance. The work celebrates the animal instinct within the human being, where power can run amok; the doll-like faces of the figures joined to bodies are latent with muscular power yet oddly static.

Malene Hartmann Rasmussen was born in Denmark and grew up reading the *Troldekskoven (In the Troll Woods)*; a book illustrated by the crepuscular drawings of the Swedish painter John Bauer. Her works are populated by the fauna of the forest floor as well as the trolls that some Danes believe exist. ‘It is not specific tales from Scandinavia but more the different sides of human nature the creatures represent,’ she says. ‘In some of the

stories I have read, and I remember from my childhood, you have to be on good terms with the trolls and other creatures so they can help you in times of trouble. Often when people help the trolls, the trolls then pay the people with gold. If you don’t keep your promise the gold turns to rocks... I find that magical aspect fascinating.’

Also inspired by the wall paintings or *kalkmalerier* on 12th century Danish churches, Hartmann Rasmussen’s sculptures are of beasts with teeth or ‘hell mouths’ and fantastical creatures such as the Sciapod - a being that has one large foot that it uses for shade as it lives in the desert. Like many others in the exhibition, her work combines dark themes with levity; her scary monsters are often grinning. Combining pagan traditions, she has made an enormous Danish crown in the style of an English corn dolly. ‘I wanted to make a piece that was like an offering to the Gods – presents to those in the afterlife in the way the Vikings would bury gold and helmets in their graves,’ she explains.

Stories of lost or abandoned children, left to scavenge for survival have always been a peculiarly northern European preoccupation and one expressed in the haunting figures of the Finnish artist, Kim Simonsson. His troupe of *Moss People*, a group of seven androgynous children dressed in wolf skins and feathers, have been abandoned it seems either by their parents or some other figure of societal authority. On their backs they carry computers and mobile phones – vestiges of the sophisticated, technologically dependent civilisation that they were born into, but now, in the post-apocalyptic world they inhabit, tools that have become utterly useless. Their green bodies are the colour of moss, but also uranium; their faces resemble those you see in Japanese manga cartoons rather than human faces, creating a haunting futuristic vision of what is to come as well as harking back to stories by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.

Myths depend on charms being worked by their protagonists; they are peopled by monsters and gods who bring both luck and catastrophe. The works in this exhibition spring from a similar universe of nightmares and dreams, with exquisite beauty matched by horror. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the work of

Carolein Smit – whose raw and emaciated bodies, flayed like Marsyas, roiling in blood and tears, are sometimes hard to look at. They challenge you to not look away or be disgusted and act as fierce reminders of our imminent decay. Smit’s sources of inspiration range from Dutch Vanitas paintings to plastic skeletons taken from a gumball-machines.

‘Death is a part of life – it makes life interesting’, she says, adding: ‘In reaction to our violent times that seem full of butchery, I wanted to find something to do with my disgust. They are about taking an historical precedent and making it relevant now.’

Each of Smit’s sculptures is executed with the painstaking dedication of the ancients for whom time was determined by the seasons and the light of the sun rather than the clock; tiny splinters of clay are brought together to form works of astonishing intricacy that take weeks to build. Every one of the 56,000 hairs of fur belonging to the hare in this exhibition, for example, was individually moulded by hand; a process that puts her almost in a state of trance, she says. It is this dedication to process that makes Smit and others in this exhibition both anachronistic but also part of a rising trend.

The haptic has replaced the plastic and even though clay might still have the status of the underdog in relation to other materials, it also has the major advantage of being the most democratic - accessible to all and unsullied by anything artificial or inauthentic; a quality that plays well at a time when everything - from the news to clothing - seems synthetic.

‘The new technologies give the illusion that you can do without hands. The same thing happened with photography and painting when people thought you could do without brushes and drawing,’ says Giampaolo Bertozzi, half of the duo Bertozzi and Casoni whose Arcimboldo-like sculpted heads made of fruits and flowers, representing the four seasons, make up some of the most dexterously elaborate oeuvres in this show.

‘We think of it in the same way, as many others did back then about photography, that it opens up a possibility, it is an additional instrument in our hands to advance in the design and imagination of new horizons.’

Bertozzi touches upon the rising interest among young

people in making objects out of clay. It seems that it's people in their early twenties who are adopting clay as their material of choice, rather than people in their fifties or sixties, with pottery classes flourishing in the beatnik centres of New York, London and other capital cities.'The popularity of ceramics among young people is due to its nature - it is so close to us humans, to the earth and to the fact that in art it is a material yet to be discovered and which still has much to give,' says Bertozzi.

Vivian van Blerk who has made a mise-en-scene of animals fleeing some unknown catastrophe, puts it another way: 'Even when clay is used to make sophisticated objects, their origin in clay hardened by fire remains understandable. I do not understand a lot of things I use daily - plastics, computers, even electricity. Perhaps understanding the genesis of things gives us some hold on the world around us, that we form it as much as it forms us. It is an honest testament to what happens when the abstraction of being enters the real through making.'

The revival of the use of clay as a means of creating abstract sculpture is one of the most compelling elements of this new trend in which the narrative element is made subordinate to the expression of raw emotion. Sam Bakewell has a preoccupation with the textural, raw qualities of clay and equally its capacity for perfection. His work, *Reader* is made of 22 slabs of clay, each fired with different glazes and chosen to mirror art works by different artists; be it Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, an Etel Adnan painting, a Fra Angelico or a Cy Twombly.

'In large volumes the human body struggles against the restrictions of volume and weight, which act as

a reminder of our anchoring in material existence,' Bakewell says. 'Clay suggests its own structural forms — evident when handled in bulk. Through the simple working of mass, weight and material sensibility, certain truths, whose transmitting power comes closer to the raw material of perception, seem to reveal themselves.'

Jørgen Haugen Sørensen uses clay to express turmoil in pieces where the clay itself, gouged and thrashed, becomes the embodiment of chaos and frenzy. Brought up during the Nazi occupation in the Second World War, the first piece of sculpture he made as a child was moulded out of a stick of dynamite that his freedom-fighting mother had left on the kitchen floor. Sørensen's figures look almost wrestled into being; pinched and pummelled and wretched as if in pain, they embody the turbulence, frustration and fear of those years that still have a continuing resonance in our increasingly nervous times.

'Since I was born, there have been wars, wars, wars, wars. All the dead, the men; it is crazy,' Sørensen adds. His dogs of war are meant to exhibit the brutality of human rage; their callousness as they circle each other, as they tear each other up, limb from limb, echoing our own savagery. Sørensen's favorite tale is *The Shadow* by Hans Christian Andersen. The story tells the tale of a shadow that takes over a man until there is nothing left of the man himself. His sculpted figures, the color of bone, long and etiolated and lumped together as dehumanised masses are an excoriating comment on the living dead, the shadows, born of war.

'I make my own myths through what I see,' he says, claiming that the story of the present moment is what

he feels needs telling, although one feels while standing in front of his works that they stand for Now and Always.

Bouke de Vries also focuses on conflict in his masterpiece, *The Last Supper*. Centered around a mushroom cloud made of thousands of shattered pieces of porcelain, the sculpture is set up on a table as a center piece like no other, populated by Delftware figurines diving for cover amid the cruet dishes and table napkins.

The show concludes with a film by Phoebe Cummings, one of a new group of clay performance artists that plays on the fragility of clay and human endeavour. It features the image of an exquisitely crafted, beautiful garland of unfired leaves and flowers reminiscent of those festooning the pediments of ancient Greek temples. Cummings is seen circling her oeuvre hanging from the ceiling like a gigantic chandelier, scrutinising and touching it intently and tenderly when, after a long hiatus it suddenly and unexpectedly crashes to the ground shattering into a thousand tiny pieces.

'When I observe plants, I can't help but think what fools we are in comparison,' says Cummings. 'I think our anthropocentric viewpoint is part of many contemporary problems in the world.'

It is said that art anticipates life by 30 years. The widespread reemergence of clay as a material in art denotes a revival of interest in the fundamental elements that sustains us and can thus be seen as a cause for optimism as well as celebration.

*Catherine Milner is  
Senior Curator at Messums Wiltshire*





Mo spreads as I remember her, she is seated in  
 her certainty and indifference more firmly than in a  
 throne. She is the unquestionable, the not good, not bad,  
 not kind, not bitter. She terrifies but she does not  
 frighten. She neglects but she does not warp or exploit.  
 She is violent without malice or cruelty. She is  
 adult without patronage or condescension. She is war  
 without possessiveness. But, above all, she is there. So of  
 course I can remember her only in clay, the common earth  
 the ground. I cannot stick the stark commercial colours of  
 stretched canvas for her or outline her in words that are  
 far from her darkness and whorls.

Chulhwa Buncheong, 2006  
 Ceramic  
 25 x 25 x 27 cm



# SAM BAKEWELL

Sam Bakewell was born in 1983 in rural Somerset and lives and works in London. Digging clay from the garden at an early age and taking classes alongside his father from the age of eight, his work since has plumbed the expansive formal possibilities of the medium. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in April 2011 and won the British Ceramic Biennale in 2015 with a series of devotional objects made over fifteen years housed in a pseudo-shaman’s mud hut made from coconut oil-clay. Through a self-critical autobiographical practice, often involving a chthonic reading of clay, the artist continues to dissect the role of the maker, the objects made, and the cultural aesthetic value systems bestowed upon them. In 2017 he chainsaw-carved a series of large, gessoed, wooden icons for the Jerwood Makers Open and in 2017 he came second in the European Ceramic Context at the Bornhold Kunstmuseum, Denmark with a pin-carved porcelain ball of hair. He has been part of Toward New Canons: Ceramics and Contemporary Art in Great Britain at the ICA Milano, and the Ceramic Artist in Residence at the Victoria and Albert Museum (2019). He has had recent solo shows with Corvi-Mora and showed with the gallery at Frieze London.

Continuing a process of haphazard, arbitrary making, *Reader* is an ongoing series of objects expanding on a chthonic reading of clay. Each is a full bag of Parian (a self-glazing porcelain-based clay made by Staffordshire factories to imitate Greek marble) kneaded through with specific coloured metal oxides and stains as a tool for thought. By exhaustively working and folding a large volume of clay until the mind starts to daydream and wander, the material has a chance to push back and to think for itself. ‘It’s a semi-conscious conversation where we read each other in tandem until a compromise is made,’ says Sam, ‘and after 6 months of drying where the stresses of the exchange become clear, the kiln then rips them up. Between ambiguity and representation, the real deal and fakes – something is made of nothing, the validity of which is open for debate.’

## What does a day in the studio look like?

Dysfunctional probably. I’d say it might seem like there’s no logic to it, and sometimes no making at all. Probably more thinking and worrying about making than making. Testing things. Generally, the end of the day being the most productive.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

Not ceramics, but clay. Digging it up in the back of our garden in Somerset when I was around six, in an area my Dad kind of gave over to me. I remember the sensation of being lost and out of myself; of something that felt like power, probably through the ability to create and then destroy again. But also perhaps, like something was being channeled. I think this is what I would now label as the chthonic element of clay, the earth/death god sense of it. Also, I’d say the shit/dirt aspect was highly intoxicating as well. So therefore, pretty sexy too, though obviously before sex was on the radar.

## What was your first use of clay?

A fish slab at school, with pressed scales when I was six. Followed by many dragons, sumo wrestlers, gremlins and the like once Dad had convinced the local college to let me attend the adult evening class when I was eight, with him acting as my foil. From there I just tried to follow a path through school and beyond where I could keep making things in clay with as little thought as possible to where it might go. I was very lucky to have a line of incredibly open-minded teachers who pretty much encouraged any idea I might have. On my foundation course, after drying out porcelain-slip filled sheep’s lungs (I was on a negative-space-Rachel Whiteread trip) which had stank out the classroom for weeks, we fired them. They caught fire and burnt out the kiln and the fire brigade had to put it out. Amongst all the departmental hysteria my teacher Nick quietly whispered in my ear “Don’t worry, I’ve saved them. We’ll re-fire tomorrow!”. I still have that broken, but very beautiful, white, bronchial tree.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

Self validation. Keeping a desire to make things in the face of their redundancy once up for sale.

## What is your favourite fable?

I’ve sat and thought about this for 30 minutes now, and nothing is sticking. And that’s more due to myth’s and fables being such a big part of my childhood and life since that, that I can’t choose just one. Religion fits into this too. Storytelling involving the spiritual, supernatural or “the other” in all its guises has always filled my head. But I’m afraid I have no favourite to single out.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

That’s too hard. I couldn’t choose, the net is too wide.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

More than ever I imagine. The particular escapism it allows for and the means in which it conveys a wider, more ancient sense of truth than the ones currently proliferated. Things that are removed from the terrible state of contemporary life seem appealing to me. But myths also acting as reminders of past lessons, and of the vastness of time so as not to get too caught up in the present.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

This distinction is not something I engage with, as the conversation can only end up being reductive.

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

As much as ever, to me at least.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today’s world?

Again, this type of question over art/craft/skill isn’t something I engage in. It’s generally something that’s used to divide or

classify, and I have too many things I want to make, without a need to pigeonhole them.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

I can only speak for myself, so the answer’s no. It defines who I am and how I think of myself. I couldn’t speak for anyone else though.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

I think ceramics has always been popular whenever the techniques or materials are available to people. It’s more been the lack of institutional facilities and staff due to budget constraints that limited its exposure to certain generations at certain points. It’s also cyclical, like all aspects of visual culture. The use of clay comes in and out of fashion, this is just another high period. It was the same 30 years ago, and before that the same.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

Alison Britton

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

Ted Hughes’s *Gaudete*. It’s guttural, psychedelic, confusing, telling and amazingly descriptive as with everything he wrote.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

Presently it’s in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London as a result of the 9-month Ceramics residency I’m half way through here. It’s a world away from my regular studio on the other side of London at the back of a communal railway arch. The V&A residency studio is built into the Museums galleries on the top floor, full of light and space, but very exposed. I’m behind glass; another exhibit to be looked at. But it’s incredible to work surrounded by a specific view of history as seen through

one material. So presently my studio means total re-evaluation. My normal studio is a place to surround myself with things that keep me ticking over. Somewhere to hide away a bit and think.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

Technology is something I try to disengage with as much as possible within reason. It’s certainly not something that I wish to bring into my work out of choice at this point. I’m much happier taking time and figuring out a way to do things myself, as inefficient as this might be.

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

The persistence for Ceramics to keep talking about Ceramics in seclusion.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

Adaptation

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

I’m lucky enough to have a lot of clay works I want from friends. Some Peruvian slipware? A Miro egg? A small Ian Godfrey could easily find a good home with me.

## What would you make if money were no object?

Currently a huge reduction gas kiln would pretty much solve a lot of my sizing issues, but in general I don’t believe in massive art holding much purpose.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

I don’t really think about what I’m doing in the abstract like that. I’d rather just get on with the making itself. Different ideas suit different approaches, but I think I try not to have a general mantra.





Reader 26  
2017  
Parian  
11x 32 cm



Reader 13  
2017  
Parian  
15 x 37 cm





Reader 25  
2017  
Parian  
32 x 13 cm



Reader 29  
2019  
Parian  
16 x 34 cm







# BERTOZZI & CASONI

Bertozzi & Casoni was founded in 1980 in Imola, by Giampaolo Bertozzi (1957) and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni (1961). From their studies at the Art Institute of Faenza they formed a dialogue with the great traditions in art and a vocation for experimenting with sculpture, seeing in ceramics the possibility of painted sculpture. Bertozzi & Casoni participated in exhibitions that focussed on ‘a new ceramics’ aiming to bridge the gap in support of a medium viewed as a minor art with respect to other artistic forms. From 1985 to 1989 they collaborated with the Cooperativa Ceramica d’Imola as researchers in the Centro Sperimentazioni e Ricerche sulla Ceramica. Between 1983 and 1994 they engaged with the world of design through Dilmos in Milan and participated in the Abitare il Tempo trade fair in Verona, the Triennale of Milan, and exhibitions in the former church of San Carpofo. During the 1990s their work took a more conceptual and radical aspect, almost to compensate for an exaggerated expressiveness and rigid perfection in execution, with Bosco Sacro of 1993, *Ever-green* of 1995 and *Scegli il Paradiso* of 1997, their work reached new creative heights. With this, Bertozzi & Casoni closed their former chapter and moved into a period of an almost exclusive use of materials and technologies derived from industry. The pictorial virtuosity was replaced by an objective rendering of selective subjects. Their preferred iconographic themes, issuing from the artistic themes, vanitas and memento mori, underwent a fantastic transfiguration and their formal reproduction adopted an objective form that diminished the presence of the artist themselves and the conditioning perspective of a particular time. This turning point, led to a new chapter of ‘contemplations of the present’ where in a sort of ‘epic of trash’, the attraction for what is fleeting, transitory, perishable, and in decay, becomes an icon of a human condition that is not solely contemporary. Between compositional surrealism and formal hyperrealism, Bertozzi & Casoni examine the refuses of contemporary society, including those cultural and artistic, characterised by an alternation between descents into decay and revivals of survivors abstraction and representation, impermanence and eternity, history and contemporaneity, fantastic imagination and technical precision.

Noteworthy exhibitions include: Tate Liverpool, Rome Quadriennale (2004); Ca Pesaro, Venice (2007); Venice Biennale (2009,2011); All Visual Arts, London (2012); Mueum Beelden aan Zee, l’Aia and Beck & Eddeling, Düsseldorf (2013); Palazzo Te, Mantova (2014); Expo, Milan and Mambo, Bologna (2015); GAM, Palermo e Mcist, Biella (2016); Palazzo Poggi Museum, Bologna and Pinacoteca Civica, Ascoli Piceno (2017); Rossi & Rossi, Hong Kong (2018); Palazzo Martinengo, Brescia (2019).

## What does a day in the studio look like?

We start the day very early because the studio is on average 30 minutes by car for both of us. We work from 8:30 to 18:30 and we work on projects that are on the go at the time.

## What is your first memory of ceramics?

For both of us the first memory of the ceramic material dates back to our entrance to the Ceramics Institute of Faenza.

## What was your first use of clay?

The first projects that envisaged the use of ceramic material date back to 1979 when we began to make the first sculptural experiments in the context of a group that was formed in those years between Faenza and Bologna called the New Pottery that tried to free the ceramic material from the cage of the traditional. Franco Solmi the director at the time of the Modern Art Gallery in Bologna, and Marilena Pasquali made projects that highlighted this new way of using ceramics that at least in our case focused on art. This brought a wave of novelty, and exhibitions such as *Il Lavoro Felice*, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Faenza in 1980 and *Terra d'Italia* at the Galleria d’Arte Moderna in Ancona in 1983 were a part of this period.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

The most challenging element is to be able to continue the thread through which our work moves.

## What is your favorite fable?

Pinocchio.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

The passion for what we do is the thing that most affects our life.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

We can’t quite explain that, but we think that the classical world is the root from which art today should find nourishment, and recognise itself within a historical path to have a base for the possibility change.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

What we do is addressed to the art world, but the technique we work with is very important and is for us a language that allows us to shape our thoughts.

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

Ceramics is used by artists today in a freer and more conscious way. When we started it was the 1980s and there was a strong prejudice on those who worked mainly with ceramics; people immediately thought of it as a product belonging more to the world of craftsmanship than to art. Today it is used for its very important expressive and mimetic potentialities.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

We believe that in order to refine technical skills today, constant daily work and the search for new stimuli are important, just as it was in the past.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

The new technologies give the illusion that you can do anything you like without developing particular skills such as those you’d need to make things with your hands. The same thing happened between photography and painting, where you thought you could do everything without any use for brushes or drawing. But instead as we’ve seen photography presenting new possibilities as an additional instrument that enabled us to advance even further, pushing the boundaries of our imagination.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today particularly amongst the younger generation?

The popularity of ceramics among young people is due to its nature that is very close to the most basic experience of humankind on earth and to the fact that in art it is a material to be discovered further, with still much to give. We also think that ceramics is a material that is relatively new in its use in contemporary art.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

We don’t know, unfortunately our age leads us to think that there are no heroes or heroines, but we all try to survive in a world of distraction.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

*If this is a Man* by Primo Levi. We think it’s a book to read and reread for all future generations to keep alive the memory of the horror that humans can inflict on each other.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

Our studio has been in Imola since 1980 because our roots are there. We realised over time that it is also very important to remain connected with the rest of the world, but we think maintaining a firm base in our cultural background has strengthened our work.

## What technological or other advances have enabled you to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

The technological advances that have allowed us to overcome some limits come from the industrial field. Unfortunately, today there is no more advanced research done in ceramics as it is a sector that is funded in such a limited way and not as appealing as art or crafts and therefore we necessarily had to turn to the research done in the industrial field.

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

The problem we see in ceramics when used in a conceited manner is the trivialisation of technique. The challenge is to restore its status so it finds its rightful place next to numerous other techniques used in art.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

Because it is the material closest to humans in their most flexible and versatile conditions, even if today the techniques have brought it to unimaginable levels of engineering.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

We don’t have the spirit to be a collectors but if we had to think about a work done with ceramics to keep with us we would think of some pottery by Paul Gauguin.

## What would you make if money were no object?

If we had limitless money we could produce ideas that would be unexpected today.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

Our approach to work is the same as any other work, we believe, we give timetables and deadlines, the only difference is probably that we are never detached from it, the thought is always projected into the work, the senses are all connected to find quadrature to problems that exist only within us, but that perhaps concern us all.









**Autunno, 2019**  
Polychrome Ceramic  
75 x 47 x 54,5 cm



**Inverno, 2019**  
Polychrome Ceramic  
75 x 56 x 59 cm







# VIVIAN VAN BLERK

Vivian van Blerk is a South African artist based in Paris. After graduating from the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town in 1996, he worked extensively in photography. His recent ceramic and photographic collection, *On the Beach*, reflects on recycling, regeneration, and the continuity of life cycles. It is inspired by ancient human remains stored by archaeologists in La Courneuve, in the northern suburbs of Paris, where the artist has his warehouse studio space.

‘Turtle arks land on the beach and their passengers disembark. From the ocean deeps the turtles carry life in many forms, from corals, plants and insects to dinosaurs, bears and elephants, and some quite small and timid people in between. All emerge onto the thin barren coast of transition, the liminal zone between a potential and dormant life in the ocean, and an active life on land in the sun and air; filled with adventure and danger.’

Van Blerk conducts workshops with students at the La Source foundation in Normandy, France; drawing on techniques of building scenes, sculpting a, painting, retouching negatives and using alternative printing techniques to create large format composite photographs.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Life Stories*, Beirut Design Fair (2018) for which he received the Fair’s Talent Award; *Interior Kingdoms*, Wunderkammer, Brussels (2017); *After Empire*, Chris Boïcos Fine Arts, Paris (2016); *When Worlds Collide*, Jennifer Norback Fine Art, Chicago (2016). Group shows include *Beyond the Bushes*, Art Sablon, Brussels (2019); *Vanities and Still Lives*, Chris Boïcos Fine Arts (2019); *Myth, Material and Metamorphoses*, Messums Wiltshire (2018); *a Fin Feather Fur*, In Toto Gallery, Johannesburg (2016).

## What does a day in the studio look like?

It usually starts by trying to clear work surfaces and most times giving up and accepting I must work on the corner of a table.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

As a small child: a row of colourful ceramic figurines and commemorative mugs and plates along the curtain pelmet of our neighbours’ living room.

## What was your first use of clay?

To model a dinosaur, a stegosaurus, to feature in a miniature diorama of assembled found objects. I had not been able to find or buy a satisfactory dinosaur. The set was photographed then dismantled, the photo being the final artwork. The stegosaurus was built around a wire skeleton and was painted with acrylic pigments. As a temporary prop not intended to be fired, it soon broke and was thrown away.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

A general challenge is to limit experimenting too many techniques with each piece and so remain coherent through the body of work as a whole. I immensely admire craft but accept I will attain only a narrow competence for a long while yet - modelling small stoneware and porcelain sculptures with simple or no colouring, varying only forms and clay types is the narrow area in which I aspire to create good works. This is the challenge of saying no to many available creative vocabularies.

## What is your favourite fable?

A man buys a sickly dying snake on a market. He lovingly nurtures the snake back to health. Its vigour regained, the snake bites him. As the man lies dying, he asks, “Why?” The snake replies, “I’m a snake.”

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

There is no one big influence on my photographic and ceramic work, which is diary-like, documenting passing feelings, thoughts and experiences. A number of photography artists whose work I encountered during my fine art studies in the early 1990s – Duane Michals, Sandy Skoglund, Joel-Peter Witkin – certainly helped console me that it was okay to combine photography with other art studio practices like painting and sculpture to tell invented stories. The cartoonist Gary Larson’s ghost floats throughout my work.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

I made a series of photos on the myths in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* a few years ago. There are scores of stories of the Gods punishing or rewarding people for behaving well, behaving badly and for just being around at the time. This last was my enduring impression of the nature of existence as described in the myths, that the mere fact of being places us in the arbitrary and unpredictable realm of life. We are to the Gods as flies are to wanton boys – they swat us for their sport, to paraphrase Shakespeare in *King Lear*. Personally, I affirm life is a wonderful, extraordinary gift, but it does come at the cost of having to put up with accident and unpredictability as long as it lasts. The historical mythologies we have received tell countless pertinent human stories and they all coalesce to tell this one story of the condition of life, of the arbitrariness that dogs our every living hour. This has not changed and so the myths that explain our situation remain relevant. Knowledge helps reconcile us to the inevitable.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

Ceramics are made from clay. Even when clay is used to make sophisticated objects, their origin in clay hardened by fire remains understandable. I do not understand a lot of things I use daily - plastics, computers, even electricity. Perhaps understanding the genesis of things gives us some hold on the world around us, that we form it as much as it forms us... it helps give us an illusion of mastering something of our immediate surroundings and our destinies to have some familiar, traditional and understandable things as part of our manmade environments.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today’s world?

When I have worked with kids and got them to make objects of their imaginings, they are surprised and delighted to discover that they too can make things. Things do not have to come only from shops, readymade, their origins are shrouded in mystery. I cannot imagine humans will move beyond feeling a need to make some things with our hands, unless we resign ourselves entirely to lives of dependence. Such slavery is not desirable.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today’s youth?

I didn’t know it was. For years I had been uneasy about attributing value to some of my final photographic prints which, as reproducible ink prints on sheets of plastic, did not seem to detach themselves from the always increasing mass of digital, television, film, posters... their material presence was not imposing and I found the pictures themselves became hard to distinguish and read, lost in the plethora of images that surround us. I tried to remedy this, using old photo processes on glass and paper to give the photos a more palpable material presence. It worked quite well but not for all my work and not at all for presenting sculpted dioramas which have been central to my body of work. Then I discovered ceramics and was seduced by the nobility

of fired clay, its toughness and beautiful finish and each piece’s feeling of being resolved and final, rather than the perpetual ephemeral sense of a work in progress which hovered around my photography. Perhaps young people born into and knowing only this world of saturated digital imagery and fleeting computer screens, where they perpetually navigate a dense but substance-less internet, have an even greater craving than us older people for something real which can be touched and lasts longer than the moment in which it is seen?

## Who is your hero or heroine?

I am afraid I don’t have one. Which is bad. It is necessary to admire in order to improve oneself. About five years ago I discovered the essays of G.K. Chesterton. Taken as a whole his essays describe in wonderfully plain English a philosophy of man’s existence that takes its meaning and its morality from our being both of the physical world and the transcendent, invisible realm. I admire Chesterton unreservedly. He analyses the modern world with breath-taking lucidity, giving specific examples, which he weaves into coherent universal analyses which, all written before the 1930s, are easily applicable to moral and existential situations we face now.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

Two books. *Heretics* and *Orthodoxy* by G.K. Chesterton. Read them together. And all of his essays and journalism. I have read some of his fiction and it’s absolutely fine, being entertaining and coherent with his philosophy, but it is the essays I mean. They are right up there with George Orwell’s essays and are in a similar intentionally plain style.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

Since 2002 my studio is my life. It is where I work and when I am unable to work and get stuff made, I get very fractious. Artmaking is a vocation but at 47 years old it is definitely a job. Without a workspace, no art. Since 2002, I have had great spaces with huge outdoors where I could do anything and my studios are always very dirty and disordered. I am not sure this is actually necessary to good work. Some of my best early photographs were made within the constraints of tiny borrowed rooms available for limited periods. The same efficiency has happened during short residencies over the years.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

It’s a bit backwards for me. Not being able to be excited by the digital transformation of photography nor being very good at using new cyber tools and techniques, has pushed me towards an ever-more materials-based photographic practice (building sets, painting negatives, printing on glass, printing techniques with cyanotype, gum bichromate, silver emulsion...). This slight disgust or indigestion with the dematerialised digital world of infinite images is probably part of what has lead me to ceramics. That, and a fortuitous friend who said, “You really should try ceramics. Come try it, I have a friend with a studio and kiln.”

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

No strong opinion except a vague mistrust of digital printers. All technologies are human and have a place in our crafts. It’s deciding how much of a technology is a help, and at what point one relies entirely on it and one becomes a slave since without the machine you have no craft to speak of. Ideas come as you go along, the materials push you in directions different to your original idea, the environment and time

while working impact on its form. The resulting work is the physical expression of all these factors of a human confronting his desires with the real world and coming up with an altogether new thing as a result of the meeting. Surely, if the work draws its meaning and substance from the dynamic physical and metaphysical encounter of process, one would seek to prolong this interesting interaction of artist and materials?

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

The objects made are useful to man and clay is widely available.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

I saw a really wonderful porcelain vase-type thing in the Frick Collection in New York in 2017 by someone called Arlene Schechet. I’d have that.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

I think I babble on about that in your question about the problem facing ceramics: that the artwork is the tangible record of the interesting dialogue that ensues with reality when a thinking being tries to express an immaterial consciousness in the material world. Because an artist is less obliged than other creators of things to make something useful, we can hope the art object be a peculiarly honest testament to what happens when the abstraction of being enters the real through doing.





**Hatching Eggs**  
2019  
Porcelain  
3 x 5cm



**Sybil, 2019**  
Stoneware and porcelain  
18 x 24 x 23cm











# CHRISTIE BROWN

Christie Brown is a UK artist and Emerita Professor of Ceramics at the University of Westminster, London. She graduated from Manchester University in 1969 and from Harrow School of Art in 1982 and set up her north London studio that year. She was Principal Investigator on the AHRC project Ceramics in the Expanded Field, awarded to the University's Ceramics Research Centre (CRC-UK) in 2011, and co-editor on the recent publication Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture (Routledge, 2016). Brown was recently elected as a member of the Royal Society of Sculptors and continues as an active member of the CRC-UK.

Brown's sculptures explore the relationship between historical artefacts and contemporary art, and the significance of archaic artefacts in museum collections. Archaeology presents a fragmented narrative of past lives and holds parallels with the practice of psychoanalysis where layers are carefully stripped away to reveal hidden information. Her work references these traces, as well as the mythology, narrative, and symbolism associated with clay. Inspired by idealised and uncanny representations of the human, such as mimetic figures, dolls, and puppets, her characters point to an animated narrative in which objects have a life of their own. Using free built elements and press moulded sections, she creates composite hybrid figures and otherworldly beings, which at the same time seem familiar; reflecting the complexity of identity and otherness. This ambiguity is key to the idea that human beings are not necessarily the centre of the universe, even if they think they are. Her most recent work is inspired by the many European folk rituals, which are still enacted every year, where the long-standing relationship between humans and nature interacts in celebrations of the instincts that bind us together. In these new works Brown strives to express a scenario where the animal nature of humans is a positive force, one where power relationships are confounded to provide the potential towards equality and mutual respect.

Recent solo exhibitions include *DreamWork*, Freud Museum, Rara Avis, Arthouse1, London (2012, 2016). Other recent principal exhibitions include *Dream On*, V&A Museum of Childhood, London (2018); *Humanism: Poem of Earth for Human*, ClayArch Gimhae Museum, South Korea (2018); *Myth, Material and Metamorphoses* (2018), Material Earth (2017), Messums Wiltshire; *Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Ambika P3, London (2014); *Marking the Line*; Ceramics and Architecture, Sir John Soane's Museum, London (2013); Award, The British Ceramics Biennial, Stoke-on-Trent (2013); *Sculptural Ceramics*, Pangolin, London (2013). Her work is featured in several private and public collections in Europe and the USA including the Victoria and Albert Museum, UK; Musée National de la Céramique, Sèvres, France, and the Mint Museum USA.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

A day in the studio can look very different depending on what stage I am at in the making schedule. My press molding process proceeds in episodes: firstly, much research, drawing and sketchbook reflection as to how to realise the ideas; next, the focused labours of polystyrene carving to make new models, followed by the mess and challenge of mold-making. Both processes take several weeks and are critical but laborious. Clay and plaster mix badly so after casting it's a big spring clean before rolling slabs and assembling sections to build a range of figures. These may relate directly to earlier design drawings or they may evolve more intuitively while building the piece. Long drying times are needed for more complex pieces. Bisque-firing, slip-painting and glazing will also take several days, maybe two or three at a time in the kiln. Sometimes there's disappointment but more often reward. Then there are days spent packing and doing deskwork. It's all part of the studio day.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

Not a first memory but a really significant one. After falling for the Leach ideal of stoneware pottery and a self sufficient way of life making pots in the country, I visited the top floor of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and was dazzled by the huge range of ceramic artefacts held in that amazing collection, such as English Slipware, Turkish Isnik pottery, Dutch Delftware and the spectacular Hispano Moresque plates from Moorish Spain, and I realised how much more exciting clay could be than thrown wood-fired faux-Japanese pottery, which in the 1980s was still regarded by many as the ceramic canon, despite the new agendas that were emerging with the work of artists such as Alison Britton, Richard Slee and Jacqui Poncetlet.

## What was your first use of clay?

I went to a night school in London many years ago and the tutor showed me how to wedge a piece of clay, cut it into small blocks

and make pinch pots. I spent the next six classes pinching pots. The process was so absorbing and meditative and provided me with a grounding in understanding the qualities of the material and my relationship with it.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

It's sometimes difficult to match the vision with the practice, to make an object that is only half formed in my imagination into a finished object. But it's important to allow the clay, which is a challenging material, to have its say and contribute to the vision. It's always a dialogue between maker and material. Also I never have enough space or a big enough kiln.

## What is your favourite fable?

I have always been inspired by Greek myths from a young age. Later I began to read *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, who documents all these stories with such passion and conviction. The story of Prometheus who modeled the human race out of clay is especially significant, as is the tale of the sculptor Pygmalion and his idealised statue Galatea, brought to life by the goddess Athene.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

The artist Louise Bourgeois has been a constant inspiration to me, as are the animation films of the Quay Brothers who are able to visualise the dream world with such uncanny precision. When I first saw *Street of Crocodiles* and *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies* I felt they had entered my unconscious while I was sleeping and invaded my dreams.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

Myths are a constant source of knowledge and wisdom if only the post-modern global world would listen to what they have to say. They can both delight and alarm us, thrill us

and warn us of dangers, and offer a sense of continuity with history and a way forward.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

Ceramics and all things clay is a constant force in our lives wherever we come from. The earth is largely composed of clay and there are countless myths of origin that revolve around this material. The transformation from clay to ceramic is a story from long ago when nomadic people began to settle and develop communities. Clay objects have been part of human existence ever since, and they are key to archaeology's understanding of how our ancestors lived. Ceramics continues to form part of our daily lives from domestic functional objects and decorative art to objects of ritual and symbolic artworks. As a material for sculpture clay carries a range of references that are both ancient and contemporary. It feels important always to keep examining history as a way to learn about ourselves and how we can improve the way we evolve.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

The ongoing human need for some kind of tactile hands on experience with no commercial or technological outcome offers emotional benefits and contributes to the way we experience ourselves in the world.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

Not at all. Technology is crucial and beneficial in so many ways but making by hand provides a welcome balance for anyone who gives it a go.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today's youth?

For many younger people the new

technologies that have developed in the last couple of decades are simply a useful everyday asset, which has always been there in their lives. The smartphone has taken its place alongside various other convenient inventions. This one is however so radical that its possible dangers of alienation and stagnation are becoming more apparent and as a result the need for activity and hands on practice becomes more necessary and appeals to many young people as a way to reconnect with material process.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

Working with clay is an immediate and alluring process, despite the mess, or maybe because of it. Its unformed quality allows a freedom that has been recently welcomed and embraced in the art world, where new technology has become just another tool for making art, alongside all the others. Process was slowly returning as a mainstream method of art practice when Rachel Whiteread first cast beds and chairs in the 1980s, even though video was the latest trend at that time. The art world is inclined to be fashion-led however and so for the moment clay people are having their time in the sun, but it was Klara Kristalova who said she chose ceramics because she didn't want to have to engage with "important art" and so maybe its still seen as a non-serious material with which to express the playful child within us all, as it was in the early 20th century when painters such as Gauguin made ceramics. The fine artists using clay at the moment, as opposed to the artists using clay who have been trained to use it, are enjoying this freedom and even using their lack of skill to create artworks that present this as a conceptual appropriation. Meanwhile many artists who have more skill because they began with a medium-specific training may still find themselves marginalised as a result, as if craft and skill lessen the ability to have

a strong concept. But the great thing is we are having all these conversations now and that is very productive and welcome.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

Louise Bourgeois

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

The recent Man Booker winner, Milkman by Anna Burns really blew me away, because it not only tells a personal story about growing up and seeking identity from a subjective angle, through its stream of consciousness heroine's train of thought, but it does so within the context of a recent war zone, and I for one had very little idea just how tough it must have been growing up in Belfast in the 1970s. Burns is challenging the usual narrative associated with contemporary novels. This book is nothing to do with clay but it's very stimulating. Another good read is *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollop which was written in 1875 but is very relevant in these present greedy times. I also rate Carl Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, which was a huge influence on my own search for identity as a person and as an artist.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

My studio is at home for economic reasons. I have two spaces, one an upstairs room for drawing, sketchbook work and research, the other a space built off the back of the house for making and firing. I am lucky to own my house and be able to build these spaces for my work but if I could afford a larger external space that would be ideal. At home the dust of my practice creeps into the living space and the studio is never big enough.

**What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?**  
Paint-on glazes!

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

The demise in recent years of ceramic courses in UK universities has thankfully resulted in a rise in small private classes, group workshops for tuition and even a Clay College in Stoke on Trent. There is little to be done in the current climate to encourage the government to offer more support to non-commercial occupations such as art and we therefore all have to build on what is left and look to the future with a positive approach. However the reduction in the numbers of BA Ceramics graduate students who possess a high level of technical knowledge and skill may unfortunately start to have an effect over the next few years.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

The material clay is beyond ancient. It's archetypal.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

Kim Simonsson, Stephen de Staebler, Daisy Youngblood, Carmen Dionyse, Johan Tahon and a few others!

## What would you make if money were no object?

Firstly I would apply to the EKWC for a residency and to take advantage of their technical support and very large kilns. I'd also have a large studio where I could make big drawings to reflect the narrative quality of my work. But as I also have an interest in bronze and other materials from time to time I would take a work like My Desk from my 2012 Freud Museum exhibition and employ fabricators to help me scale it up and cast it in or plaster, but I would then maybe paint it so it looked like a very large ceramic work.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

It's what gives my life some meaning.





**Black and White**  
**Katze, 2019**  
 Ceramic  
 98 x 31 x 23 cms



**Grand White Bat**  
**2019**  
 Ceramic  
 75 x 30 x 27 cms





**Jokili**  
**2019**  
 Ceramic  
 103 x 32 x 23 cm



**Grand Careto**  
**2019**  
 Ceramic  
 108 x 28 x 27 cms







# PHOEBE CUMMINGS

Born in 1981 in Walsall UK, based in Stafford, Phoebe Cummings studied 3D Design and Craft at the University of Brighton, before completing an MA in Ceramics & Glass at the Royal College of Art (2005). Cummings attended artist residencies in the UK, USA and Greenland and was the winner of the 2011 British Ceramics Biennial Award. Cummings has exhibited in the UK and internationally, including commissions for the Museum of Arts & Design, New York; University of Hawaii Art Gallery, Honolulu; Jerwood Space, London and Clay Arch Museum, South Korea. In 2015 photographs and film of Production Line were acquired for the permanent collections of York Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery, and Shipley Art Gallery.

Cummings has taught extensively as a visiting artist at institutions including the Royal College of Art, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Harvard University, Royal Danish Academy of Art, and Bergen Academy of Art & Design. She was awarded a fellowship at Camden Arts Centre (2012-13), was the inaugural winner of the BBC Woman's Hour Craft Prize 2017 for her work Triumph of the Immaterial at the V&A and was shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Awards 2018. She is a Research Associate at the University of Westminster, Ceramics Research Centre and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Brighton in 2019.

Cummings explores ceramics as a time-based medium, creating detailed, temporary sculptures and environments from clay. The work is built directly on site, where possible, the clay is reclaimed and reused at different locations. Her intricate sculptures consider existence, nature, and the possibilities of clay as raw material. There are references to historic ceramics and decorative arts traditions, explored from the position of the present, moving beyond the object as an endpoint. The work is subject to change as it drips, dries, shrinks and cracks; sometimes further activated by heat, water or magnetic fields in the environment. The work generates opportunities for materials and objects to enact their own slow performance and builds an ongoing interest in how it is experienced in the present, how we 'recall' or access it in the future and what disappears. Work created specifically for the exhibition is built directly onto a pulley, hoisted as it is made, and held in a suspended state. It is a lush fiction that blends botanical accuracy and decorative designs of Eastern and Western origin, incorporating the prehistoric right through to the changing and conflicted landscapes of the present.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

I have only very recently made a studio at home. A lot of making happens on site, using clay directly in the space where it is shown. This way of working initially grew out of financial necessity as I was unable to afford a studio or the cost of firing, however, it quickly became an intrinsic part of the work itself. Over the past fourteen years I have continued to work in this way, often in very different environments; from Hawaii to the Arctic, museums to factories. Increasingly, and since having children, I try to prepare components at home that I will take with me, this has happened mainly in my kitchen and now I have a separate workspace in the garden. I tend to have a lot of plants in the studio as well as clay, it is important for me to look at the structures of growth and details of real plants, even if those I make are imagined.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

We had a set of willow pattern bowls at home, I remember my mother telling me that they contained a story. I was about five at the time and thought if we smashed the plate there would be a piece of paper trapped inside with the story written on it. She taught me to look more closely at what is written in an image.

## What was your first use of clay?

I used to go to a pottery class as a child. I can clearly remember the satisfaction of making something with my hands. Our group exhibited in the local art gallery and on reflection I think that was an important experience. It was the first time I think I felt visible in society, I was aware that making gave us a voice.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

Clay is a challenge, it is constantly changing, which is also why I am so drawn to it. Dealing with shrinkage can be difficult, it is important to understand how things break as

well as how they're made, I respond to that understanding in how I construct the work.

## What is your favourite fable?

I am not sure I have a favourite, but I enjoy the way fables offer an alternative version of reality and the possibility to learn and grow from fictional stories.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

Artist Jefford Horrigan was a visiting tutor when I was studying at the Royal College of Art. He really shifted my understanding of how I work with clay and gave me advice that I still draw on. Amongst many other things, he told me that I could make work by the side of the road if I needed to, don't make excuses, just get on and do it. That was so important after I graduated, I declared myself bankrupt and had to find a new way of working, he gave me confidence and that push just to get on with it.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

Stories and fiction have always been important to humanity, I think today advances in technology give us different experiences of reality as part of our everyday life. There is such multiplicity to who we are and how we exist and interact with the world around us, for me myth is part of that. Written fiction is often a starting point for me, writers such as J.G Ballard, Ursula K Le Guin, Virginia Woolf and W.G Sebald have been particularly significant, I see parallels between working with clay, a monochrome substance, and written language, both of which can construct vivid worlds with structure and texture. I am increasingly thinking about writing as a resting point of the ephemeral sculpture I make, considering how I might document sculpture through writing, sometimes as fictional memories of the piece. Maybe there is always an element of myth around how a work that no longer exists is retold in the present.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist seems the simplest term to describe what I do as it encompasses a wide range of practices, but I am clear that my work is rooted in craft and specialism in ceramics. I use traditional ceramic techniques and my thinking has been shaped by a close relationship with materials and appreciation of decorative arts. The outcome of that however is usually temporary sculpture made from raw clay. The fleeting existence of the work also has a close connection to performance.

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

I think ceramics has always been relevant to humans across cultures and time periods and continues to be so. We experience it through objects for use and as an artistic medium, how we use it shifts and evolves. Our definition of ceramics is less rigid today, for example the work I make never makes that transformation from clay into ceramic with heat. Clay and ceramics touch so many areas of our lives, some we pay little attention to such as in mobile phone technology or radioactive waste management. I believe the relevance of ceramics as an artistic material today is deeply connected to relationships between body and material; physical and sensory perception. As humans I think we seek connections, and clay responds to the simple press of a finger, maybe that plays to our innate desire to communicate, in a very basic way it confirms we exist, there is action and consequence.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

For me, technical skills give me greater opportunities and possibilities in what I make. I can choose how and what I want to communicate through making, it may sometimes involve pushing against those skills or traditions as well, but by having that knowledge of material and process

I remove certain limitations. There is a great satisfaction to making and direct involvement with materials and I think it can lead to innovation across a wide range of fields.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

I am not opposed to technology or machine production, but I don't think it can ever completely replace making by hand. I think they offer different possibilities, individually and combined.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today's youth?

Perhaps recognising a need for physical, material experience in reaction to our increased interaction with the digital world and 'virtual' reality.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

I think there are always waves of interest, things rise and fall, ceramics has never disappeared, there are just fluctuations in where the interest comes from, who uses it and in what way.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

Nature.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

Ursula K Le Guin's *Direction of the Road* would be a good start, it is written from the perspective of an oak tree. I love short stories, Lydia Davis is one of my favourite writers, brevity interests me in both senses of the word.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

I don't see a studio as a necessity, the way I think and work with clay is part of who I am so that moves with me. I am fortunate to now have made a workspace at home, and I appreciate the chance to work close

to my family. Over the past 14 years I have worked without a fixed studio space and I enjoy the interaction of working in different places, meeting new people and responding to different spaces.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

In terms of how I make things I work with traditional ceramic processes and use very few tools. The internet and the ease with which we can connect to the rest of the world has enabled me to work in the way I do, I think without the possibility to work internationally it would have been hard to sustain my practice.

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

In the UK we face challenges to do with education, the closure of ceramics courses in universities over the past decade and the rising cost of tuition fees has radically changed the provision and access to ceramics training and education. However, from that new opportunities and ways of learning are also emerging which provide different models and provision. I think it is important to embrace change and opportunities.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

I think it is part of a primal need to create and to interact with the material world around you. It is such a varied material, it has so many differing qualities and such rich potential, it has always had something to offer, across time. I think the directness of working with clay is also important, it will listen to anyone's hands, it rewards touch.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

I love Gillian Lowndes work, the combination of materials, risk and yet a sense of calm. The work of contemporary artists Marit Tingleff and Sam Bakewell would definitely be on my wish list too, and historic pieces, some Palissy, Meissen and Sevres without a doubt. It would be a big collection.

## What would you make if money were no object?

Time is the biggest luxury, I would love to work on a project over a longer period of time, years, and to have the funds to dedicate my time to that.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

I am more interested in the way we experience materials and objects, how they change and interact. There is a flow, and I try not to fix things or hold them still for too long, I try to allow the material a voice and agency. I think an anthropocentric viewpoint is part of many contemporary problems in the world, When I observe plants I can't help but think what fools we are in comparison.









**Study I, 2020**  
Clay, wax  
18cm x 15cm x 20 cm



**Study II**  
**2020**  
Clay, wax  
20cm x 15cm x 20cm (detail)







# CLAIRE CURNEEN

Born 1968, Tralee, Co. Kerry, Ireland, Claire Curneen lives and works in Cardiff.

Her sculptures are poignant reflections on the nature of humanity and our precarious place within it. Universal themes of loss, suffering and sacrifice underlie her intricate, porcelain figures, their translucent and fragile qualities offering potent metaphors through which to consider the human condition. Her ceramic figures have an imposing presence which tap into our desires, fears and mysteries. They are highly visceral, referencing Catholic imagery from the early Italian Renaissance.

Porcelain, terracotta and black stoneware create an exquisite textural finish to these works, with dribbles of glaze and flashes of gold to accentuate their rich qualities. These figures bear bold narratives of human experiences and explore themes around death, rebirth and the sublime.

‘As they run rampant across many of her works, the floral patterns provide a distinctive tattoo behind which the porcelain figure seems to disappear. Sometimes she will confine them to just a few areas; sometimes she covers a figure from head to toe in their delicate camouflage; and occasionally they defy the figure’s boundaries completely, covering the base as well. Curneen is drawn to this sense of fluid identity. Not only does it echo what happens in the high firing process, when vitrification can cause porcelain to twist, decorations to slip, and colors to gently bleed and move across the surface, it also reflects Curneen’s own interest in fluid borders and hidden, uncertain forms.’

*Beauty in Brokenness: The Sculpture of Claire Curneen, by Richard Davey. Image Journal, issue 97*

## What does a day in the studio look like?

I have occupied many studios over the years, some wonderfully atmospheric, although freezing cold, others exciting and edgy but somewhat challenging after dark. My studio at the moment is at the end of my house, it is warm and bright, I built it there as it was a perfect solution when rearing a small child. As the teenager years loom, I'm I now ready for the new larger studio away from domesticity. I expect this will be my last studio.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

My father brought home a ceramic bird when I was 10 years old. He had been visiting his brother in Madrid and discovered his wife had been making ceramics. It was a round plump shape, which felt good in the hand. What seemed significant at the time was the fact that this object was made by someone I knew and better still a family relation. The Bird joined the collection of other random objects that came home after my father's many visits.

## What was your first use of clay?

When I was 19, I made a series of teapots with varying spouts, handles and lids and they clearly demonstrated no function at all. I loved their sculptural possibilities and the problems a teapot body, spout, handle and lid presented. These limitations provided endless permutations on form, yet the teapot was always there.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

The endless self doubt.

## What is your favourite fable?

Bluebeard. Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* is a wonderful unsettling interpretation of this fable.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

Piero della Francesca's *The Baptism of Christ* in the National Gallery has been a constant go-to reference for me. It challenges every aspect of my being, a painting that is utterly beautiful and complex. The skin of the Christ figure is translucent and fragile, very much like porcelain. The whole scene depicted has a uniquely charged presence.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

Myth is a good way for us to be able to explain the unexplainable.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist is my preferred term, but ceramics is a way into how one reads and understands my work.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

Skill is vital for us to articulate our ideas and this enriches the experience of what is being communicated, but it is not everything.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

No and this is very unlikely to happen, although the media would like you to believe otherwise.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

Ceramics is visceral and has a certain honesty which is rooted in craft. Crafted objects give you something to believe and the world of art needs that now more than ever, ceramics is a good antidote.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

I have occupied many studios over the years, some wonderfully atmospheric, although freezing cold, others exciting and edgy but somewhat challenging after dark. My studio at the moment is at the end of my house, it is warm and bright, I built it there as it was a perfect solution when rearing a small child. As the teenager years loom, I'm I now ready for the new larger studio away from domesticity. I expect this will be my last studio.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

Not much has changed in technology when working with clay, my hands are my tools.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

Because it is ancient and still bound up with mysteries and it tells us so much about the past. For us to understand ourselves we must delve into the past and ceramics holds many of those histories.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

Johann Joachim Kändler in particular the Meissen goat at the V&A.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

I think Woody Allen says it all in this quote: 'To love is to suffer. To avoid suffering, one must not love. But then one suffers from not loving. Therefore, to love is to suffer, not to love is to suffer, to suffer is to suffer. To be happy is to love, to be happy, then, is to suffer, but suffering makes one unhappy, therefore, to be unhappy one must love, or love to suffer, or suffer from too much happiness – I hope you're getting this down.' *Woody Allen, Love and Death*





**Still Life, 2019**  
Porcelain  
98 x 42 x 35 cm



**Still Life, 2019**  
Glazed stoneware  
60 x 27 x 23 cm





**Rise, 2019**  
Porcelain  
70 x 50 x 30 cm



**Empty Tomb**  
2019  
Porcelain  
70 x 38 x 27 cm







# MALENE HARTMANN RASMUSSEN

Malene Hartmann Rasmussen is a Danish artist working within the field of narrative figurative sculpture and installation. Educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, School of Design, Bornholm and Royal College of Art in London, she now lives and works in London. A recurring theme in her work is the forest and the mythological creatures that lurk in the dark woods. Her mixed-media ceramic installations use motifs from the domestic and natural world. She weaves together notions of memories, daydreams and childhood nostalgia into a fairy-tale of her own making. Hartmann Rasmussen's interest in the forest stems from its recurrence in European literature and myth, ancient cults, pagan rituals, and as a metaphor for the hidden realms of the unconscious mind. Comprising a number of elaborate fragments, she creates a tableaux of visual excess through which she seeks to evoke an emotional response in the viewer and actuate their imagination.

Her work draws on the idea of animism; that animals and plants have a soul and that rivers, mountains and rocks, if not actually alive, are in some way sentient. She is interested in the human subconscious and strives to create a hyper-real world that addresses this gap between perception and reality. Her ornate ceramics may initially appear excessively sweet, but upon closer inspection reveal themselves as impossible and absurd objects, imbued with the artist's own dark narrative. A strong presence of worship, ritual magic and the supernatural runs through the installation *Fantasma* (2019) made for *Beyond the Vessel*. As a form of catharsis, the artist tries to exorcise misery, anger, and grief – as if they were demons – emotions which relate to the loss of her father and mother and the memories of a time now passed.

Hartmann Rasmussen has exhibited in numerous exhibitions in the United Kingdom and Europe including *Homo Faber*, Michelangelo Foundation, Italy (2018); *C'est le Bouquet!* Fondation Bernardaud, France (2017); Collect Open, Saatchi Gallery, United Kingdom (2017); *Material Earth I & II*, Messums Wiltshire, United Kingdom (2017/2018); Jerwood Makers Open, United Kingdom (2015); La Biennale Internationale de Céramique de Vallauris, France (2014). Recent solo exhibitions in the UK include *Waldeinsamkeit* at Aspex Gallery (2016) and Messums London (2019). In 2018 Hartmann Rasmussen was awarded a residency at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Artist-in-Residence programme, where she produced a body of work inspired by the oeuvre of the sixteenth century French potter, Bernard Palissy. Her residency culminated with an installation at the V&A Medieval and Renaissance Galleries during London Design Festival 2018. Hartmann Rasmussen's work has been acquired by private and public collections such as Swindon Museum and International Ceramic Research Center Guldagergaard.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

I start the day by walking to the studio together with my little dog Django. My partner Sylvain and I live in the North London area called Seven Sisters and my studio is a 10 minute walk from there. When I unlock the door downstairs, Django runs as fast as he can up the stairs and wait for me there. I usually make coffee and he gets a snack and lies in front of the heater to warm up and rest. Sometimes I have a kiln to empty or a firing to start otherwise I unwrap the sculpture I am working on and begin modelling. I listen to Danish radio or Spotify, music means a lot to me and I can't work if the quality of the sound isn't good, so I bought a nice B&O speaker for the studio and often play pretty loud music. The hours go by quickly and at 1pm I have lunch. I work until the afternoon and then I take Django for a walk, sometimes to the coffee shop nearby, they serve a beautiful flat white that I enjoy while doing a bit of social media and emailing. Most sculptures take 3-4 weeks to make and I usually work on 2 or more sculptures at the same time, as the clay has to dry a bit to hold the weight as I build upwards. Alongside modelling the sculptures I make glaze and colour tests, I think about the properties of the glaze and how it can enhance details in the surface or soften up the shape. Two days a week I have my assistant Leah around, she helps making small parts such as feathers, berries and snails. She is a great help and a very skilled artist too. I usually work until evening and walk home together with Django just in time to make dinner with Sylvain.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

My best friend in school was called Linda. She was from Sweden and her mother was a potter. I often went to her place after school and remember looking at all the pots they had at home. For my birthday Linda gave me a tiny slip decorated terracotta pot with painted birds her mother had made.

## What was your first use of clay?

My first use of clay as a child was making small figures and buildings for a snow landscape. My mother was a teacher in the nursery where I was, and we made clay there together. At home I painted the objects and we made a landscape with cotton snow and placed a church, houses and small red hatted Nisser (gnomes) dotted around. We did that every Christmas.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

Time. My work is very time-consuming as I strive for perfection. It is hard to decide when I piece is finished as it can always be better.

## What is your favourite fable?

When researching for my recent installation *Troldeskoven (In the Troll Wood)* I got hold of some old books from the antiquarian store with stories and sayings told for generations from mother to child in rural Denmark. The stories evolve around trolls and subterranean spaces on the island of Bornholm. I lived on the island for 3 years while studying ceramics and some locals still believe in them. In the daytime the trolls live inside rocks or inside tumuli, the grassy mounds of earth raised over Viking graves that are dotted all over the landscape. At night the grass and soil rise up on glowing poles forming a roof. Inside you see the trolls dance and drink and if they invite you in to drink with them, all the soil and grass will fall down and bury you inside forever. the Danish word "bjergtage" (taken by the mountain) originates from these stories, "bjergtage" is the Danish word for bedazzle. The strong bond between myth and language is something I find fascinating.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

My childhood.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

In my opinion there will always be a need for myths. It is connected to our inner life and feelings. It is a way we make sense of events that can seem senseless and a way to digest the difficult.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

There is an endless beauty in ceramics. The way the luscious glazes flow into details and the way that different coloured oxides bleed into each other is an inexhaustible source of inspiration. The tactility of the material is a perfect mediator to convey emotions.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

For me skills are freedom. Mastering your material enables you to make anything, there are no limitations, your imagination has free reign.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

Since the beginning of time humans have used their hands to make, I find it hard to imagine a society where all creativity is purely based on thought.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today's youth?

Education has gradually become more and more academic. Ceramics is the counter-effect of this. A lot of it might just be fashion, thinking of all those sloppy craftspeople out there with thousands of followers on Instagram. I am sure they will have found another material in a couple of years. What I hope stays is ceramics a legitimate subject to study and in time I'm confident that people's preconceptions about who you are just because you work in a certain material will change.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

A need to get your hands dirty, an escape into something tangible. The immediate quality of the material and the fact that you have to work with the material, the symbiosis with the clay and the feeling that you are not always in control. It is a natural material that you can dig up in your garden, so I guess there is a back to basics thing going on. The sculptural qualities of clay have been used for centuries in bronze casting as it is a superior material for modelling. Now artists have finally got their eyes open to the beauty of this versatile material.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

Alejandro Jodorowsky

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

I do not attempt to engage myself with everyone, but a recent book that made a great impact on me is *Entwined* the biography about the Outsider Artist Judith Scott written by her sister Joyce Wallace Scott. Outsider Artists/Art Brut is a great inspiration, I'm very fond of artists like Henry Darger, Augustin Lesage and Louis Wain.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

I moved to London to study at the Royal College of Art in 2009. After graduating I stayed and later I met my partner Sylvain here, so I stayed instead of going back to my native Denmark. The studio is my hideaway. It is a complete escape that I can't live without.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

My process is very hands on, I do not use any technology for the making. That said technology is important for my practice

in getting the work out there. I do prefer getting inspiration from books, experiences and memories and try very hard not to spend too much time on Instagram and other social media, they do shape your creative output and that is something I am not interested in at all.

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

The ceramic educational systems and cultural organisations are the biggest challenge to ceramics. They seem stuck in a past where there were solid definitions of what craft, art and design were. Today you see fine artists working in wood fired ceramics and potters making performative and conceptual sculpture. I do not see any problem with that but having worked both within the ceramic world and the fine art world, I have experienced lots of preconceptions about who you are as an artist when you work in clay.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

It is a hardwearing material. You find ceramic work that is over 25000 years old and still intact. To me that is a super material. Just the idea that one of my sculptures could last that long is mind blowing. There is a tacit knowledge in the material, you can pass on a lot of information to the receiver. Not just historical facts on making processes but also ideas and feelings. There is the uncontrollable part of it too, the transformation from soft and malleable to hard and static that happens in the kiln. You have to let go and lose the control to the kiln. The firing always adds something to the piece... not always good though. It is a living material and that is fascinating.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

We do collect ceramics as both my partner and I know a lot of artists working with clay. One of my favourite pieces is a present from New Zealand artist Jim Cooper, it is a psychedelic dog with a very cheeky grin.. it looks like him. Another one is a *Medusa Head* from Carolein Smit that stares at us from high up on the wall. I would love to have a piece by German based Leiko Ikemura, Danish artist Marianne Nielsen, Swedes Frida Fjellman and Klara Kristalova or American Allison Schulnik. Of historical ceramics on my wish list is a Martin Brothers grotesque monster or one of Jean Carriès Gothic beings. The Danish Symbolist artist J.F. Willumsen is another favourite of mine.

## What would you make if money were no object?

An art installation on the moon.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

Feed your brain, close your eyes and look within.





**In the Dead of the Night (Head)**  
**2015**  
 Ceramic  
 33 x 44 x 43.5 cm



**Corn Dolly Crown #4**  
**2020**  
 Ceramic  
 23 x 40 x 40 cm

**Corn Dolly Crown #3**  
**2020**  
 Ceramic  
 20 x 25 x 25 cm





**Fantasma (Totem)**  
**2019**  
 Ceramic  
 195 x 72 x 45 cm









# JØRGEN HAUGEN SØRENSEN

Jørgen Haugen Sørensen, born in Copenhagen in 1934, is one of Denmark's most esteemed and decorated sculptors. Since the age of nineteen, he has lived and worked in various European metropolises such as Paris, Verona, and Barcelona. In 1971 he moved to Pietrasanta in Tuscany, Italy, which has served as his primary residence ever since. Throughout his entire artistic career he has consistently and independently focused his attention on the human condition in society. Since his debut in 1953 he has, without any formal training or schooling, shifted effortlessly between materials and modes of expression within the sculptural sphere, and mastered each transformation with continuous success. In a continuous line towards abstraction, Haugen Sørensen engaged with Portuguese granite for more than twenty five years, and created some of his most significant and monumental public sculptures for cities and landscapes throughout Europe and the US, before he, in the late 1990s, returned to a more direct sculpturing in clay, and in recent years towards expressive bronze sculpture that has been modelled up in clay.

Through his extensive oeuvre, which spans sculpture, relief, ceramic tablets, drawings, lithography and film, the artist has participated in several international group exhibitions and biennials and has been awarded many distinctions, including the lifetime grant of the Danish Arts Foundation. He has done countless commissions, redefined city spaces, squares and parks, erected enormous sculptures in capitals such as Seoul, Ankara and Rome, and has been decorated by numerous official institutions – notably the Copenhagen Courthouse in 2013. Notable solo exhibitions include: Galleria del Naviglio, Milan, Italy (1961); Galleria Ariel, Paris, France (1963); Louisiana, Humlebæk (1964); Foundation of Sonja Henie and Niels Onstads, Høvikodden, Norway (1976); The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek of Copenhagen (1980); Charles Cowles Gallery, New York, USA(1983); City of Prato, Italy (1983); San José Museum of Art, California, USA (1983); Halkbank Sanart Galerisi, Ankara, and Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul, Turkey (1991); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, England (1993); *Silent Witness*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (1999); *While We Wait*, National Gallery of Denmark (2007); *Justitio and the Witnesses*, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (2014); *The Crowd*, Pietrasanta, Italy (2017); *Time meets Time* at the Willumsens Museum, Denmark (2019). His work is represented in the collections of museums in Denmark and abroad, including, Louisiana, Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus; KUNSTEN Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield. Jørgen Haugen Sørensen was awarded the Eckersberg Medal in 1969 and the Thorvaldsen Medal in 1979; the highest national honour a Danish artist can achieve.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

The sooner I get started in the morning the better it is, because if I start later in the day there are too many things that have occupied my mind. I should be as undisturbed as possible before I start, so I'm fresh. At the same time, I must also have a pretty clear idea of what direction I want to go in, otherwise I can't do anything, I cannot search my way to a sculpture, I must have a pretty clear idea of what I want to do.

Sometimes my assistant comes and helps me with building something in clay, either after a sketch I've modeled or from a drawing - clay is heavy and Benjo helps me build it up, and then I proceed alone. Some days we have to make a mold of something that I've finished or a cast from a mold, or we must hollow out a sculpture I've modeled - and preferably nothing else of practical value/measure. Some days I only paint a fired sculpture. I use ordinary acrylic colors and apply a layer of wax, or I have longer periods where I only make drawings in my office.

## What is your first memory of ceramics?

The first impression of clay is one my mother gave me. My brother and I would be left alone at home when she'd go to work. Her being a single parent meant that she had to work a lot to keep us alive, so she bought modeling clay for us to sit at home and model. It was plasticine of course – damn - we didn't have clay at Amager.

My mother was also a kind of a resistance, freedom fighter during the war, and so she sometimes hid weapons and the like in the kind of undercover shop that she was running from our house. And then one day my brother Arne and I crawled into some cabinets that ran along the wall under the windows, and here we found a room and we crawled in, it's what children do. In this room we found gray packages with something printed on the oily wrapping

paper and we took the contents out and sat down to modeling, happily. When my mother came home she got a shock the moment she saw us sitting there on the floor using her dynamite as modeling clay. The dynamite, by the way, was in fact really good modeling material because it is actually a plasticine – just without the explosive material in it.

I first got in touch with real clay when I became an apprentice. I had stopped going to school, I actually did not finish school because my school was turned into a hospital during the war. But I had to do something in this world and my mother wanted us to have an education. So, I was sent to a ceramics factory to become a plasterer and a potter, a place called Ipsen's Widow, which was a ceramic workshop where they made large vases and petty bourgeois ceramics for every home, so this was where I started. I was trained to make molds for ceramic pieces with 50 wedges at a time, they were very fine shapes for very intricate things and that was what I learned - I was 15. They had a master named Sørensen, who modeled all their models and I stood next to him and he liked me very much, because I was always modeling things and then I could fire my stuff in the factory kilns. That was where I first got the idea of how to model and make and then fire something and then it was finished.

## What was your first use of clay?

The first day at work I got two or three small, plaster molds that were handed out, which I had to fill with clay. I'd press clay into the molds and these little weird things came out of them, they looked just like tiny pillows. Then I was given a long sequence of numbers, which I had to scratch into the wet clay. I couldn't really understand what it was, so I asked the other workers what I was working on and they said, that these were corpse-candies, used when you burn corpses. You put one of these

into the corpse's mouth before starting the burning process, so once they were fired you could collect the ashes around the numbered clay, which would remain solid as it is refractory clay, and check the number to see who it was. So, this is how I started my ceramic career, by making corpse-candies.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

It was probably when I had my first exhibition - with just three sculptures. Immediately afterwards, the gallerist got me a studio, and I was very young and had not done much really yet and there I was I suddenly, standing in a large studio - which was my own studio, and I was supposed to be a sculptor. I think it was the worst moment, it was a very big challenge. Or when you are asked to make something that is large-scale for a public space in a city and you will change a whole neighborhood by doing it. Carrying out a large-scale sculpture and getting everything in working order; financially, conceptually and getting it to work within a larger entity, is a very big challenge. But if, by challenge in my practice, you mean in my work, I would say it is the actual performance that is the most important thing to me. I have to choose a method amongst many to do whatever it is I am doing; how to model the clay to express my idea in the best way. There are many ways, you have a thousand choices you can make but you have to choose only one of the countless ways to do it - that is your challenge.

## What is your favourite fable?

It's *The Shadow* by H.C. Andersen, the story is about the idea of the look-alike – one's shadow, the drama of it all. It is one of the strangest stories ever. The shadow that takes over and finally there is nothing left of the man himself, it verges on Kafka, it's very beautiful. H. C. Andersen is a

wonderful writer, who has influenced me and my upbringing. His tales meant a lot to all young people and children back then. H.C. Andersen was someone who was read out loud and explained to you, his fables and fairy tales were very important.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

My mother's story of course has influenced me a lot... Something that has made an impression on me quite early, was the sculptor Niels Hansen Jacobsen's *The Death and the Mother*; it was terrible and left a strong impression. It is actually a portrait of a H.C. Andersen tale. The mother is sitting with her dead child and death comes behind her with the scythe to take her child away and this is of her own choosing, to protect her child from a terrible future. But meeting many writers, has probably been of the greatest influence. I was very fortunate to become friends with many even when I was very young. When I moved to Paris I lived with the writer and poet Birgitta Trotzig and her husband, the painter Ulf Trozig and they introduced me to another level of literature. Throughout my life I have been very lucky to meet fantastic writers and poets and to this day they have a great influence on me and my thinking.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

I find it difficult to answer, because I think that our whole story is like a myth. Our own situation is what I use in my work. I don't think there is any reason to use old myths - myths and stories, because what our time unfolds to us, is so important to tell I do not see the other as something... and I cannot use religion or I cannot use old myths. I do not use them because I think the time we live in, is so exciting and there are so many images right now, and all of that is enough for me. It is reality in the present that draws those images inside



my head – it is from them that I make my own images and only them. It is from reality that I form my motives. When I make a sculpture like the *National Feeling* it is the feeling that motivates the work, because you have Nationalism that is germinating, so I want to express that feeling – of how it looks and then I arrive at a point, that it must look pretty much like this. Or with *That's Why They Call Them Dogs*, I'm actually thinking of humankind, in certain situations, then you could also have called the work: "That's Why They Call Them Humans" – and in this way, my way of thinking becomes my kind of "myth" – I make my own myths through what I see.

#### Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

I believe I'm probably mostly an artist, as I am not a ceramicist in the sense that I don't care much about glazes and the actual chemistry of glazes that many ceramicists do and have a great knowledge of. I don't particularly use the different expression you can get from glazes; I just use a glaze, like a painter buys colors from a color dealer. Ceramicists have the patience to do endless tests and samples, but my work wouldn't benefit from that. There was something very funny when I was an apprentice at the ceramic factory. They had an attic where they kept a huge number of models from former ceramicists, names that I cannot remember now, but it was a wealth of stories that were left there in the attic, which I thought was fascinating. And some of the stories, some of those things, I was asked to copy. Since I was no good at doing something on an assembly line, they put me to do something that was very difficult instead. I should do the "panther hunter" and whatever else they were called, intricate battle scenes and such, but it was a powerful first impression. The world of images that is possible in ceramics,

because that kind of pottery from around the turn of the century culminated in amazing images all together. They were Art Nouveau, and were all full of myths. So later, when I entered the School of Arts and Crafts, I had incredibly bad taste compared to the other ceramists, because I modeled myth-like images, and they only went for design. Theirs were so very clean and everything whereas mine were just swamped with those things - heads of monks, all such strange things, images of drunkards lying in ditches, or slaves in chains, almost social realism in small sized ceramics, as I had done in the factory – and sold to the workers – and made extra income from.

#### What is the relevance of ceramics today?

To me, it is relevant, because I use it to make three-dimensional images, for this purpose clay is amazing and cheaper than bronze and many other materials. Clay is as quick as a drawing; it is very relevant because it is very immediate compared to other materials. Clay is fantastic, you can do anything you like, you can make very accurate things, you can make bombastic things. Clay also has the ability to be modeled more or less roughly. It's like a huge alphabet; and it is the oldest material. When humans first found a lump of soil that was like clay, they bent down, picked it up and immediately made an image of a little fat lady that they could carry in their pockets.

**What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?** I think it's great that you can still exist in a situation that has remained the same since the very beginning. You pick up a lump of soil and form an image in it – and you can do it with your bare hands. You need nothing else but your hands and perhaps a stick and you will be able to do it - it may be that the sticks have been honed a little

more today, but it doesn't really matter. In a way it is the most primitive and also the oldest method we have. Compare it to any other material, such as painting, where the paint has to be grinded, if you want to do something with iron, you have to forge and heat and hammer it up and all that; video needs specialist equipment, it all depends on an entire other process. With clay: nothing. It's right there in front of you and you can just pick it up and shape it, – it's you and your hands, it's the meeting between person and material – quite simply – and that is what makes it so beautiful. In our technological and digital world, it is quite astounding that there is something that has all that history in itself and still works. It contains an ethics and an aesthetic within itself, the material has it all.

#### Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

A good friend of mine - a poet once said: "Don't forget that one day you will go into a museum and see a plastic bucket in a display case - and there will be a guy saying: 'Imagine what they could do back then!'"

#### Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today particularly amongst the younger generation?

Because it is free from all artificial matter, it is an original material - that's why. There is nothing in between the secrets in the clay and the pictures in your head when you get a lump of clay in your hand. Then you press, then you make a head, then you continue on making whatever it is, that's what happens with clay. What other material would you compare it to? Video? To make a video there are so many obstacles before you can do anything with it, it is not something you can just go to. You don't have to be educated to work in clay. Young people may be tired of all the technology and lights - to make

music today, they must have a scene and smokescreen and flashing lights - they can't just sing a song. There is no one who just stands up and sings, they have to have all that apparatus behind. Young people are looking for an authentic experience, just like singing a song, it's exactly the same. It's your own pristine material. You don't have an entire Apple company between you and an idea, which still has to find its form, it's a very delicate moment. Technology manipulates. Apple computers, PCs manipulate you just as plastic toy tools constrain children. With clay it's your own conversation with yourself.

It can be difficult at first, with no assistive devices. But once you get there, then there is nothing between you and the material. I also think that people are looking for something original, clay is completely immediate, and already existing in our minds somehow.

Think of the milk bowls that you could buy once. Each village had a pottery workshop because they did what everybody needed in the kitchen - it's all gone now. Præstø, Sorring, if you look at a map from that time, you can see that there were ceramic workshops everywhere, that is, potters. They are all closed and I don't think they are coming back either. Now it's something else, ceramics today is more artificial. But I don't think that ceramics will become so popular as it once was, that potteries will arise again around countries. Very little of that kind is left, instead ceramics has become more decorative or artistic.

#### Is it a disadvantage that it has been lifted to an artform?

You can say that – it's a bit like what happened with photography. When you started to make art-photography, well, photography in its original form died a little – just like what happened to jazz, when you started making jazz as an artform and compared it to classical music - then jazz

died out to some extent overtaken by pop music and the like. I think why ceramics has become popular amongst today's youth – the way it has, is because it has emerged as another thing, as a means of expression, so it has moved from pottery to become an expression in clay, its own expression. People are looking for themselves in the clay.

#### Who is your hero or heroine?

Nicola d'Arca from Bologna, is truly great. His Pietà from the 14th century; a group of sculptures in terracotta in full size, is incredibly done, so he is my hero in a way. From the very first time I saw his work, it has remained in my head ever since - there are of course many others, but within the field of ceramics, he stands out as one of the most amazing I know of.

#### Name a book that everyone should read and why?

I read a lot of poetry because it is clean – it is like sculpture – or ceramics for that matter, all the superfluous is taken off, it says exactly and only what needs to be said. What others have to use four hundred pages to express, poets can say in four lines. One can also say that people should just read, there are so many books I could recommend - I always read, since I discovered that you can be in the best company with the greatest minds of all time by going to a library. A library is a great invention where you can find all the books you need, I almost think it would be unfair to mention only one, because there are so many – It's a gift. But please read Dostoevsky, Proust, Musil, Joyce, Kafka, Hermann Broch, Thomas Bernhard, Birgitta Trotzig, and all the poets.

**Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?** My studio is a place where I stay, the place I live; my workshop is a place where I'm alone, where I can think and find the images I keep in my head. But I can work anywhere – I've travelled around the world and worked in many different places. When I was very young for about ten to fifteen years I lived in small hotels and I liked that because it was so non-committal. In Oaxaca or in the Netherlands, we were many people working in the same studio, it did not disturb me that there were other people when I was working. I enjoy having my own studio because there is space and I can close the door - this is of course an ideal condition for me, but otherwise I have worked everywhere in foundries and when I was young at the ceramics factory. We would be 4-5 people in a room and they talked and shouted to each other and it didn't bother me, I can concentrate anywhere. That's because I can shut off everything, I can shut myself inside and be myself, anywhere. I can turn off the outer world, it's very easy for me. When I am filmed or photographed, then I try to be open to it, but I am not actually there as a human being, I walk around in my own thoughts most of the time. Music disturbs me because I think sculpture and the kind of visual arts I make require silence. It's like being down in an aquarium and looking around, to be closed inside of oneself – there is no sound at all. The same is true if you go into a church or some other large room where there is silence, it is nice when you are looking at pictures, but if you have music playing at the same time, it immediately mixes with the picture and becomes a part of the picture and this is a little annoying to me.

**What technological or other advances have enabled you to push the boundaries of your material / practice?** A crane.

#### What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

The selling. Also because marble and bronze sculptures have gained a greater value which I think is wrong, as it is in fact the same thing. Ceramics is the original piece itself and not a print of anything, it's unique. A clay work comes directly from the hands of the artist, whereas bronze has gone through a long process and marble many times has been copied and enlarged from a model. I just think that clay has all the possibilities and that's what is fun about it.

#### Who would be in your ceramics collection?

I already have a nice collection of pre-Columbian, Indian, Chinese, Turkish, Mexican, Japanese, Neapolitan, and antique ceramics. I would like to have it enlarged, also by more contemporary works: A Francisco Toledo, a vase of Alev Siesbye. In my imagined collection, I would also like to have a Bindesbøll, a Jørn, a Picasso wouldn't hurt. A tight collection of some Japanese masters.

**What would you make if money were no object?** I would have liked to make a house, a large decorated house in ceramics, with sculptures on the outside as a part of the architecture – that I think could be fun. I should have made a tower together with Asger Jørn and Echaurren Matta, we planned to build a tower on the island of Ven, and I am sorry we didn't manage to do so. The idea was to build a tower so big it could be seen from the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, which was just opposite the island of Ven, mostly because Jørn wanted to piss Jensen off, the then proud creator of Louisiana. We applied to do it at the clay factory Hasle Klinker on Bornholm, but they didn't want us.

#### What is your philosophical approach to making?

It must be here and now, what I do and that I am a witness of this time – and I pass it on, so – "I think, I see"– many of my works are contained in that title.





That's why they call them dogs  
(Dog sitting), 2008  
Burnt clay, red earth, wax  
30 x 70 x 55 cm



That's why they call them dogs  
(Dog lying), 2008  
Burnt clay, red earth, wax  
25 x 65 x 38 cm





**That's why they call them Dogs  
(Dead Dog), 2008**  
Burnt clay, red earth, wax  
15 x 73 x 38 cm



**Somewhere, 2018**  
Glazed stoneware  
30 x 25 x 43 cm





Kim Simonsson



# KIM SIMONSSON

Kim Simonsson (1974) is an award winning Finnish Swedish sculptor who uses ceramics as his medium. He is fascinated by the possibilities of the material and experiments with the surfaces of the sculptures as well, such as the moss-like decoration he invented with nylon fibre. Simonsson has exhibited his life-sized animal and children sculptures worldwide in solo and group exhibitions. His works are in a number of public and private collections such as Victoria and Albert Museum, Arario Gallery, Racine Art Museum and Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art. Kim Simonsson is presented by Galerie Forsblom in Helsinki, Jason Jacques Gallery in New York and Galerie NeC in Paris. The sculptor lives and works in Fiskars Village, Finland.

‘It is impossible to know how the *Moss People* community exactly came about. Initially, the gang of children was strong, norms and social hierarchies of their own presiding in the community. Whether animal adults influenced them a great deal or the children grew up without any peer support apart from their own remains unknown. Similarly, why the community dissolved and the members gradually went off by themselves remains a mystery.

The series of ceramic works by Simonsson illustrates a time when the *Moss People* community had broken apart to a degree. Simonsson’s sculptures portray individuals who believe they can cope without the support of their community, but have often set their hopes too high. He narrates from the outside, like an impartial documentarian capturing what he sees.

The name *Moss People* refers to the children’s sensible camouflage; the moss green figures blend perfectly into their surroundings. The world created by Simonsson is a comprehensive artwork that spans from one year to the next, progressing, diversifying and growing steadily. The artworks can be assembled into various compilations depending on the space.’

*Veikko Halmetoja, Tales of the Moss People*

## What does a day in the studio look like?

Days are very different. I usually work with a few sculptures at the same time. I like to listen to podcasts or music when I sculpt.

## What was your first use of clay?

I started to work with clay seriously when I was accepted to Aalto University to study ceramics. I applied as a joke. I wanted to be a painter but didn’t get into the Art Academy. At the Aalto University I realised that sculpting is natural for me so I stopped making any kind of functional ware.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

Everything outside of the studio work that is demanded of the artist nowadays. In studio I guess it’s the first 50 cm of the sculpture.

## What is your favourite fable?

I think that all of the fairy tales that we are grown up with in Scandinavia from Hans-Christian Andersen to Astrid Lindgren can be seen in my work. Maybe Moomin is my favourite fable, if you can call Moomins animals.

## What thing or person is your greatest influence?

I use as an inspiration for the faces of my characters a bust made by Camille Claudel that is displayed in The National Museum of Norway in Oslo.

I live in the countryside surrounded by big forests. They are also my sources of inspiration. On the other hand, popular culture, contemporary art world and video games influence my works. I have always been interested in history, art history and mythology in particular. They play an important role in my works. I was raised in a home that belonged to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The trauma from secession of the religion in my teenage years is part of my works.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

As the western world is getting more secular, we want stories that don’t have a moral element to them. We want to believe in something more than the everyday life, that gives as reason to wait for something exciting that will come or happen.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

When I was studying I always wanted to make sure to everybody that I was a sculptor and not a ceramicist. Later on, when I have gained better self-esteem, I didn’t really care how people would characterise me. I do all the ceramic work myself with a skill that I have achieved by working a lot, so I have a skill and I am a craftsman.

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

Ceramics is indeed very popular at the moment in contemporary art. It is affordable for young artists who want to do sculptures, since for example casting bronze requires large infrastructure around you. With ceramics you can do pretty much anything you want; express yourself in any kind of shape or though from modernist to figurative and narrative.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

For me it was necessary to learn the skill to make my sculptures because I couldn’t afford somebody else to do them.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

It’s not all about making something concrete to this world but also about the therapeutic part of working with our hands. The human hand is so amazing and we have trained it over tens of thousands of years – that it is something humans have to use.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today's youth?

It is an affordable material and you can sculpt or do anything from clay. It also has a lot of reference points in our culture from utility ware to sculpture.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

Ceramics has been for so long in the fringes so there is the excitement of something new.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

A Canadian friend always joking told me “Don’t be a hero”. Maybe we would need less heroes in the world.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

The *Bible* to understand what the fuss is about and understand that it’s written by mortal human beings and not God. I suppose most Christians haven’t read the *Bible*.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

I work and live in Fiskars Village, Finland. It used to have manufacturing of the famous orange scissors. Nowadays the factory is situated ten km away and the village is known for its artists, designers and craftsmen. One third of the population is in a creative field. It is very inspiring to work there and it enables many kinds of cooperation.

I also have a studio at the Arabia Art Department in Helsinki, part of Iittala & Arabia Design Centre. The Art Department was established in the 1930s along with the ceramic factory and the main focus has always been unique ceramic art. Nowadays the factory no longer exists but the Arabia Art Department Society carries on and develops the Finnish ceramics art heritage in the same space it was established decades ago.





**Moss Amish with Treasures, 2018**  
 Ceramic, glass, wood,  
 ready-made  
 120 x 55 x 55 cm



**Moss Man 2018**  
 Ceramic, nylon fibre,  
 feathers, glass,  
 found object  
 120 x 40 x 40 cm



**Moss Girl with Feather  
Treasure and Feather Crown  
2018**  
Ceramic, feathers, rope  
125 x 50 x 50 cm



**Moss Boy with Feather  
Crown and Fashionable  
Jacket, 2018**  
Ceramic, nylon fibre,  
rope, ready-made  
125 x 50 x 50 cm







Carolain Smit



# CAROLEIN SMIT

Born in 1960 in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, Carolein Smit is a Dutch artist based in Belgium. Smit studied at the Academy of Arts Sint Joost in Breda in the Netherlands, training as a lithographer and specialising in drawing. Smit began making works in clay in 1996 at the European Ceramics Working Centre in 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands, where she worked for three months. Following her artist-in-residence, Smit was awarded the Keranova Prize. Having no original training as a ceramicist, Smit works outside the boundaries imposed on the field by traditional ceramics training. Carolein Smit has frequently lectured about her work at conferences and in museum settings.

Smit's work has been shown at The Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht; Art Basel, La Maison Rouge, Paris; me Collectors Room Berlin; the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. In 2010 she presented a solo show at the Kunsthal, Rotterdam. Recently Smit also took part in the exhibition *CERAMIX*, curated by Camille Morineau, curator of Centre Pompidou and Lucia Pesapane at the Bonnefantenmuseum (2015) and *La Maison Rouge* and Cité de la céramique, Sèvres (2016). In 2018 Smit made three large solo exhibitions in major museums in Europe, namely *Myth and Mortality*, *The Fairytale world of Carolein Smit*, V&A, London; and *L'amour Fou*, Grassi Museum, Leipzig. These two exhibitions were combined in the show *L'amour Fou* at the Drents Museum in Assen in the Netherlands. The three exhibitions were accompanied by an oeuvre book entitled *Carolein Smit, Works*.

Carolein Smit works closely with several galleries including; Galerie Michele Hayem and Galerie DA END in Paris; Galerie Michael Haas in Berlin; James Freeman Gallery in London and Messums Wiltshire in Tisbury. Since 2003 Smit has been working with Manufacture Sèvres in Paris and in 2017 she was invited to design a work in edition for the Manufaktur Nymphenburg in Munich. In 2018 and 2019 Smit showed work with Galerie Patrice Trigano at artfair TEFAF in Maastricht. Smit's works are featured in several private and museum collections worldwide including the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Grassi Museum in Leipzig and the Drents Museum in Assen.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

It starts early in the morning after morning walks with the dog and I prefer every day to be the same, the radio is on a network with only talking people, I don't listen really, it is just a murmuring sound. I work and sometimes my assistant comes for glazing, she works mostly silent. I want it to be quiet. Dog is snoring under the table.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

I come from a family of artists, there was always all I could wish for to work with. Friends of my parents were artists too and I remember how in the sixties I was in the studio of Rosemarie van Oort, a friend of my mum's and she worked with clay. She always gave me high praise for my attempts. Sometimes she would ask me to make something, a duck or a pussycat and she would fire it and give it as a present to someone's birthday, this I do not remember but my mum told me.

## What was your first use of clay?

At home and at the studio of this friend of my mum's, also in art school I have made several clay pieces but I studied graphics so I did not do much with clay at that time. In 1996 I started at the European Ceramics Working Centre in 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands as an artist in residence for a three month working time with clay. It changed my life.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

When a piece has hair or small holes, I have to keep my concentration to stay on it, it takes a long time to finish these pieces.

## What is your favourite fable?

It is about a scorpion and a man who have to cross a river and there is only one boat. The man offers the scorpion a place if he promises that he will not sting the man. So they agree and they set off to the other side. When they arrive on the other side however

the scorpion stings the man anyway and the man asks him why. The scorpion says, because it is my nature.

## What is the relevance of myth today?

Myths and other old stories, fairytales and biblical stories can make you see a point of view that is not necessarily your own. Most of these stories were not only told because they were fun but also to educate and to tell right from wrong.

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist, I just use clay and glaze and such because I can make the things I want with them. Normally in the morning I have a small hesitation before I stick my hands into the clay, I am not fond of the consistency and the dampness, but once I have started it does not bother me anymore.

## What is the relevance of ceramics today?

It seems that more artists with no ceramic training are beginning to make works in clay, it is good to see what boundaries they push and cross being not bothered by ceramic conventions that trained ceramicists sometimes have.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

Technical skills make it easier to achieve what you want. If you are constantly held back in making something because you have no technical skills, that is irritating. For me, it is not something I think about much, I invent as I go along. It is nice if you are not clumsy and have an open mind to possibilities and solutions that are unconventional.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

I see more and more how artists are returning to the 'old' techniques. But also very exciting developments where clay is being 3D printed or designed by a computer, I like both. Important is what you do with it.

## Why do you think ceramics is becoming popular amongst today's youth?

That is also because a lot of contemporary ceramics are very exciting. I always say that there is nothing I cannot make from clay, it has no limits for me.

## Why do you think there is such an international vogue for ceramics today?

Because there is such a lot of exciting ceramics, both in art and design.

## Who is your hero or heroine?

Bertozzi & Casoni and funnily enough they look at me in the same way.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

*Gould's Book of Fish* by Richard Flanagan, a story that keeps turning around and around, a lot of horrible details and beautiful images are being depicted. Unusual way of telling a story, surreal.

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

We had our house built about ten years ago to the size we needed. My husband is an artist as well and we have two large working spaces and a modest space to live that is adequate for two people and two dogs and the best roof terrace for miles around with stunning views. We live in a very small village just beside Maastricht. From my studio I can see into the garden, it is quiet.

## What technological or other advances have made you able to push the boundaries of your material / practice?

Having a large kiln and a device to lift heavy sculptures. Working with larger galleries and knowing that transport is not my business.

## What is the biggest problem or challenge you see with ceramics today?

Transporting the works and getting the sculptures to their destination in one piece.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

It is a material that can serve any artist or craftsman to make what they want. And the result is mostly beautiful, I am a sucker for beautiful things.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

Bertozzi & Casoni, Simone van Bakel, Malene Hartmann Rasmussen, Claire Partington, Katsuyo Aoki, Bouke de Vries, Phoebe Cummings.

## What would you make if money were no object?

The same as I am making now. I don't think that ceramics materials are very expensive and thus see no limits.

## What is your philosophical approach to making?

It is not very difficult to like my work. Everything shines and glitters, is adorable and the details of eyes, tongues, noses and ears are endearing. People love that kind of refinement, it can bring back memories of precious Meissen porcelain. That's just the way I like it. I want people to love my sculptures. I want them to lose their hearts to it and I use all I can to make them do so. At the same time, I want to make this loving not too easy. It's painful, fragile, unfulfilled and sometimes dangerous. Where are

the boundaries? Where does innocence become guilt? Life become death? That is what my work is about. The tension brought by emotional dilemmas, trying to separate right from wrong where everything evolves out of clumsiness, coincidence and misunderstanding.

In my work these dilemmas exist as a complicated knot of conflicting messages. I think that the turning point where seriousness becomes melodrama, beauty turns into overkill and love becomes hate, makes a subtle balance that is very annoying and at the same time very interesting.

Humour sneaks into my work when I am making it, I never make sketches before I start, I need it to be an adventure. The highly detailed works allow my thoughts to wander and combine several things that sometimes are not very logical together but do make sense in the end. When I am working in my studio, I go from one work to the next, combining several thoughts and fascinations.

I love cabinets of curiosity, Wunderkammer, scientific collections, museums with devotionalia. All these collections contain images that are related to art, but also to other areas. They show the exceptional, the strange, the rare, to secure the scientific order. They lift up the supernatural to restrain the whims of nature. They suggest order and security. At the same time they warn us for chaos that will occur as soon as we let go of this proposed order. They are images that scare us and also restrain that fear. The ambivalence makes us look with admiration and disgust.





**Pug, 2019**  
Ceramic  
40 x 33 x 30 cm



**Secret Serpent, 2018**  
Ceramic  
148 x 45 x 34cm





**Hare, 2017**  
Ceramic  
33 x 42 cm



**Mouse with blackberries**  
**2018**  
Ceramic  
23 x 29 cm





Bouke De Vries



# BOUKE DE VRIES

Born in Utrecht in the Netherlands, Bouke de Vries studied at the Eindhoven Design Academy and Central St Martin's in London. After working with John Galiano, Stephen Jones and Zandra Rhodes, he switched careers and studied ceramics conservation and restoration at West Dean College. In his practice as a private conservator, he was faced daily with issues and contradictions centred around perfection and worth. This became the starting point for his art practice. Using skills honed as a restorer, de Vries' artworks reclaim broken pots in the aftermath of trauma; the breakage caused accidentally. De Vries has called this 'the beauty of destruction'. Instead of reconstructing these objects, he deconstructs them. Instead of hiding the evidence of this most dramatic episode in the life of a ceramic object, he emphasises their new status, instilling new virtues, new values and moving their stories forward.

Bouke de Vries has had various solo shows, the foremost being his installation *War and Pieces*. Over the past six years this has been shown in 14 different locations, including Taiwan, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. It is currently touring museums in the US. International group shows include: *Revive, Remix, Respond*, Frick, Pittsburgh (2018); *Un-Damaged*, Musea Dal Ceramica, Mon- dovi (2017); *Asia-Amsterdam*, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem (2016); *My Blue China*, Ariana Museum, Geneva (2016).

De Vries' work is represented in numerous, prestigious public and private collections including: Museum Voorlinden, the Netherlands; MONA, Tasmania; National Museum of Norway; Philadelphia Museum; MUDAC, Lausanne; Collection Mizuho Bank, London; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Collection of Elton John, London/Los Angeles; Collection of Taiq Al Jaidah, Qatar; the Edgar J. and Clarissa Bronfman Collection, NYC.

## What does a day in the studio look like?

I start every day at 7am – when the world is still relatively quiet. The inspiration for my work comes from my background as a restorer and I still do some restoration for a few clients I have worked with for a long time. I always start my day with any restoring there is in the studio before doing my own work. As I use a lot of resins with varying drying times I am always working on several pieces at the same time, which makes the work very varied. I am fortunate to have my studio in the garden of my home, so usually have lunch in the house with my partner. I generally work till 4.30pm and then go to the gym and do another hour or so of work after that.

## What is your first memory of ceramic?

A large blue and grey antique German salt-glaze jug my parents had, which had to be turned into a lamp after my brother and I broke it while playing.

## What was your first use of clay?

I made a few small figures out of hand-rolled clay in kindergarten, which my mother kept. I still have them.

## What is the most challenging element to your practice?

Finding good-quality broken pieces to work with. It is important to keep to the standards I have set myself. Finding good things is difficult but exciting.

## What is your favourite fable?

*Beauty and the Beast* (Cocteau, of course).

## Are you an artist or a ceramicist?

Artist. In my view a ceramicist is someone who makes ceramics. I don't. I use existing ceramics as a tool to express myself.

## What is the argument for learning / honing technical skills in today's world?

For a long time, technical skills were regarded as irrelevant but things go in waves and there is now a time when technical skills are being re-evaluated. The nature of my work requires these skills (which I have been able to develop during my decades as a ceramics restorer). There is definitely a renewed appreciation of such skills.

## Have we moved beyond the need to make with our hands?

Never. As with everything, when new methods of making things come along it is always claimed that what went before is irrelevant and will disappear – but it never does. There is always reason for people to work with their hands. It seems dexterity is integral to human life.

## Name a book that everyone should read and why?

*The Sioux* by Irene Handl. Surprise!

## Why is your studio where it is and what does it mean to you?

My studio is in my garden and it's my sanctuary. It's never a chore to be in there. The 20-second commute and the door I can lock at night are important – to keep that work part separate from my home life.

## Why do you think ceramics has endured from ancient times?

Because it is such a versatile material, what it can do is like magic: what begins as the basic raw materials of the world, earth and water, infinitely manipulate-able, becomes something very durable by the alchemy of fire, an amazing and primal technological advancement. You start with rudimentary storage vessels. These get decorated. Then glazes are discovered... and it has never stopped. It's amazing how every culture has developed their own styles of ceramics and we can still identify these cultures by their ceramics.

## Who would be in your ceramics collection?

Grayson Perry (he already is LOL).

## What would you make if money were no object?

If I wanted to make something and it would cost a lot of money I would find a way of raising a lot of money.





**Fragmented Vase 1**  
**2020**  
 Two Chinese Song  
 dynasty vases,  
 19th century porcelain  
 fragments, glass inserts  
 25 x 23 x 64 cm







## With thanks to

Mesher Gallery  
The Vehbi Koç foundation  
Karoly Aliotti

The artists, writers and contributors, without  
whom this would not have been possible

The Messums Wiltshire team  
Hannah Hooks  
Hannah Davies  
Stephanie Rennie

And our curator Catherine Milner

Photography by Hadiye Cangökçe and Sylvain Deleu

Front cover: Christie Brown  
Back cover: Malene Hartmann Rasmussen  
Inside front cover: Claire Curneen  
Inside back cover: Carolein Smit







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