

MESSUMS

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Press Release



British Studio Ceramic

Alison Britton | Stephen Dixon | Carol McNicoll | Magdalene Odundo | Martin Smith

6 March - 4 April
Messums Wiltshire

Clay is remodelling itself centre stage not only in contemporary art but also at Messums where the spring programme opens with an array of exhibitions exploring the work of leading British Artists.

The programming is headlined by 'British Studio Ceramic', curated by Paul Greenhalgh. It coincides with the launch of Greenhalgh's book *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation* and places this British movement as an important moment in the story of this ancient medium. He will launch the book with an online talk on Saturday 27 March, 6:30pm.

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From the exquisite burnished pitchers and bowls by Magdalene Odundo to the ewers scored with annotated drawings by political potter Stephen Dixon, this exhibition reveals the rich diversity of styles and techniques currently at play within this archetypal art form.

Beyond their utilitarian function, vessels have been key to human survival for millennia.

Equally, clay has always been the most widely used of all materials by human beings. But in recent times and despite and perhaps in spite of our industrial and digital advances, there has been a notable surge of interest in using it amongst contemporary artists as Messums has identified in a series of ground-breaking shows.

Last year we held *Beyond the Vessel*, showcasing clay sculptures by 13 artists from seven European countries.

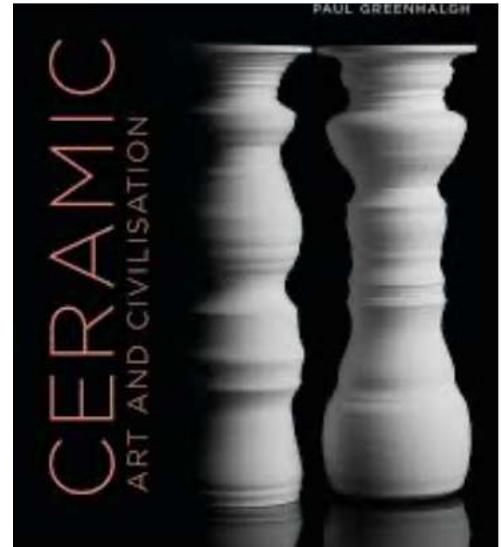
In 2021 we return to the Pot; the elemental form that embodies the heart of our sense of survival.

Colourful, jug-eared urns by Alison Britton and those by Carol McNicoll - both leading lights since the 1970's in the revival of ceramics in the UK - sit next to Martin Smith's digitally printed architectonic, abstracted ceramic forms.

Most polemical of the group are the works by Stephen Dixon, Professor of Contemporary Crafts at the Manchester School of Art, who uses clay the most 'mundane' of materials he says, for social commentary and political dissent.

Working in British tradition of satirical artists like Hogarth and Rowlandson, Dixon combines drawings of historical and current public figures with written annotations, layering the images and words to give depth and acuity to the narrative.

Alongside this is an exhibition of modern Korean masters Ree Soo-Jong and Lee Hun Chung, combining a sense of history with a contemporary finesse. These are joined by Bjork Haraldsdottir's mesmerising black and white vessels, etched by hand with the geometric patterns of folkloric designs of her native Iceland. In an accompanying show are the large cheering amphoras by Kitty Shepherd. In an act of what she calls 'restorative nostalgia' her pots feature hand-painted images of Mr Whippy ice creams, Orange Mivvis, Fabs and Zooms.



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Celebrating the enormous diversity of interpretation of this classic form by some of the best makers in Britain and elsewhere, this exhibition is a timely and important reminder of our ability to build great art from very little.

For further information or images please email: press@messumswiltshire.com

[Image: Magdalene Odundo, Untitled, Burnished and Carbonised Terracotta, 31 x 23 cm]

British Studio Ceramic
6 March - 4 April 2021
Messums Wiltshire & Online

ONLINE TALK & BOOK LAUNCH: Ceramic, Art & Civilisation with Paul Greenhalgh
Saturday 27 March, 6:30pm

Notes to editors:

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE is a leading multi-purpose and art gallery set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn and surrounding buildings with exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant.

MESSUMS LONDON is a modernist space on Cork St where the family have had a presence since 1992.

MESSUMS YORKSHIRE opened in early July 2020. The third Messums gallery to open in England, it hosts a rolling programme of exhibitions with a focus on clients and artists in the North of England. A comprehensive list of past and future exhibitions can be found on our websites.

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