

MAY 2024 £7.95

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Preview

'How many ways can clay soar?'

Eve M. Kahn admires the range of ceramics on show at TEFAF New York this month



1. *Untitled*, 2013, Magdalene Odundo (b. 1950), burnished and carbonised terracotta, ht 51cm. Offer Waterman (price on application)



2. *A Nobana and Pinnate Leaves Bowl*, 2023, Hitomi Hosono (b. 1978), moulded, carved and hand-built porcelain, diam. 22.3cm. Adrian Sassoon (\$10,000–\$20,000)

Women ceramicists are proving just how far they can experiment with clay, stretching, tinting and firing it in new ways, which galleries will highlight at the TEFAF show in New York in early May. The wares for sale range from so ethereal or monumental that you can barely imagine how they are structurally sound, to so unabashedly preposterous that you cannot resist a smile.

London gallery Offer Waterman is bringing stoneware bowls and vases by the Scottish-born, London-based artist Jennifer Lee (b. 1956). On her oxide-laced greyish bodies, some as diminutive as espresso cups, she creates haloes and flecks of contrasting colours, from black to yellow. Her narrowly tapered bases give an illusion of instability. The artworks seem barely earthbound, despite their deadpan descriptive titles such as *Asymmetric*

banded dark base, tilted rim and Dark mottled, speckle, rust base.

Four black and orange terracotta vessels by the Kenyan-born, Surrey-based artist Magdalene Odundo (b. 1950), also at Offer Waterman, are all austere named *Untitled* (Fig. 1). Odundo generally produces fewer than 10 works a year, with gourd-like silhouettes and burnished, carbonised finishes. Clouds of sienna hues trail across some of the charcoal-coloured surfaces, resembling twilight pastoral skies.

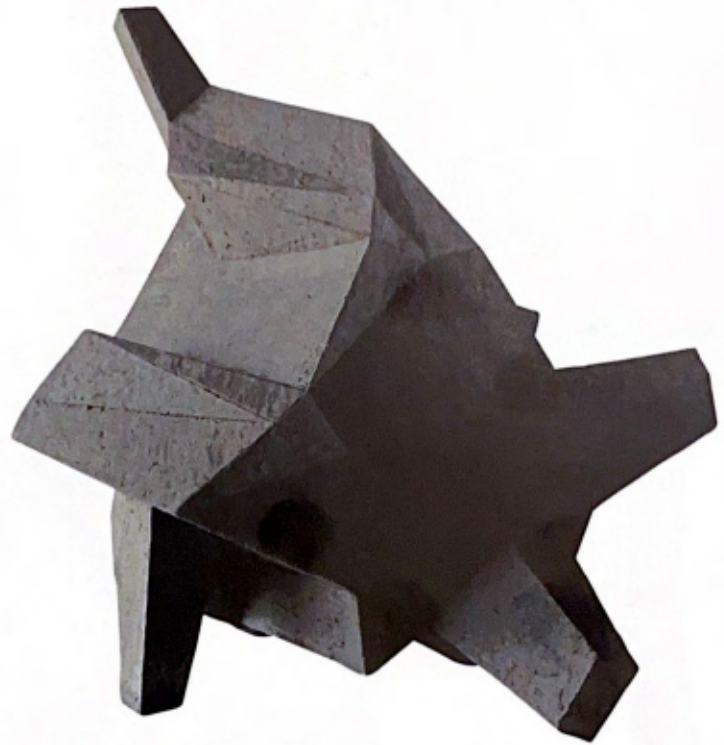
At London dealer Adrian Sassoon's booth, leaves and flowers teem in high relief along every inch, inside and out, of an ivory-coloured porcelain work by the Japanese-born, London-based ceramicist Hitomi Hosono (b. 1978; Fig. 2). On the creamy stoneware shaft of *Jazz Piano Pot II* by British ceramicist Elizabeth Fritsch (b. 1940), polychrome rectangles are

inlaid in tumbling, zigzagging columns. Felicity Aylieff (b. 1954), a British ceramicist who has established a studio in Jingdezhen, China, has enamelled foliage or slathered striations in shades of cobalt blue on porcelain vases – one nearly two metres high. Two vases by Kate Malone (b. 1959), a British ceramicist, bristle with bubbles and polyhedrons streaked with crystalline glazes (Fig. 3). With the highly adorned surfaces, Malone says, 'an overall sense of fun and mobile energy swirls around the pot'.

Ceramics as vehicles for humour will be explored at the booth of the New York- and Los Angeles-based gallery Friedman Benda. A table lamp by Swiss-born Californian artist Carmen D'Apollonio (b. 1973) is enigmatically titled *I speak only French today*. The brown-speckled grey base is shaped like a blob of dripping dough, or a human perched on a ledge and donning a lampshade for headgear. D'Apollonio



3. *Fizzing Atomic*, 2024, Kate Malone (b. 1959), crystalline-glazed stoneware, ht 46.5cm. Adrian Sassoon (\$25,000–\$35,000)



4. *Station*, 2018, Karen Bennicke (b. 1943), terracotta, ht 59.7cm. Hostler Burrows (\$9,000–\$15,000)

fires at high temperatures, choosing glazes that develop unpredictable, earthy marks in the heat. Clay, she speculates, has 'its way of being, its own personality'. ('Hello It's me again' is the catchy title of D'Apollonio's solo show at Friedman Benda in Los Angeles this summer.)

Canadian-born, France-based ceramicist Kristin McKirdy (b. 1958) has supplied five sculptures with circus overtones for Friedman Benda's TEFAF stand. Three resemble ankle boots with white spats, studded with clown noses. Two evoke green and brown seals, balancing crimson balls on their white snouts. Towering over the Friedman Benda booth will be *Pinkterra 2* by Nicole Cherubini (b. 1970), a ceramicist based in upstate New York. Her urn-like pillar of terracotta and earthenware is more than two metres high. The surface is gouged and paint-splattered enthusiastically – imagine what the Etruscans

would have fashioned out of mud and detritus from campsites and parking lots toward the tail end of a Burning Man festival.

Hostler Burrows, a gallery with outposts in New York and Los Angeles, is offering works by the Danish artists Karen Bennicke (b. 1943) and Marianne Nielsen (b. 1971). Bennicke's terracotta sculpture *Station*, inspired by modernist architecture, is blackened, faceted, creviced and knobby – it seems suited for being launched into outer space, to lumber along the surface of another planet, recording atmospheric and geological measurements (Fig. 4). Nielsen assembles filigrees of glazed stoneware modelled on plant parts. *Avocado* and *Leaf Crown*, her works on view at TEFAF, dance on the tips of foliage. In an essay for a current exhibition of Nielsen's work at Hostler Burrows' Tribeca gallery HB381 ('Leaf, stem, twig', until 15 June), the critic Glenn Adamson

calls her botanical pieces 'modest, self-effacing to the point of being stealthy' as they manage to 'beguilingly update' *trompe-l'oeil* traditions such as 19th-century glass flowers.

TEFAF attendees may be left wondering: how did so many variants on ceramic daredevilry survive the firing process, let alone the journeys to Manhattan's Upper East Side? How many ways can clay soar, when moulded, scratched, polished, pigmented and cooked by the right hands? **A**

Eve M. Kahn's biography of the writer, reformer and bon vivant Zoe Anderson Norris will be published by Fordham University Press.

TEFAF New York is at the Park Avenue Armory, New York, from 10–14 May. For more details, go to www.tefaf.com.