

Contemporary themes in traditional hues.

Blue and White at Oxford Ceramics Gallery

17th July - 5 September



The Philosopher by Philip Eglin, 2020

/ Felicity Aylieff / Edmund de Waal / Philip Eglin / Charlotte Hodes / Chun Liao / Bodil Manz / Nicholas Rena / Paul Scott / Rupert Spira / Janice Tchalenko /

In many cultures, the colour blue is associated with love, truth and divinity. As a colour it also has longstanding connection to the art of ceramics from the pearlescent grey blues of Chun stonewares to the ink blues of cobalt oxide which became the foundation for the global culture of 'blue and white' wares.

This summer, Oxford Ceramics Gallery is celebrating the blues by bringing together important works by artists who explore the aesthetic potential of blue as both colour and cultural symbol in contemporary ceramics.

Philip Eglin and Paul Scott subvert storytelling traditions embedded in patterns of industrial blue and white ware to explore contemporary personal

and socio-political themes Charlotte Hodes also reworks industrial transfer wares of Stoke factories like Spode but uses collage to foreground the female figure as a prevalent motif: a figure often hidden in accounts of ceramic history.

Bodil Manz also draws on industrial ceramic processes to create her paper thin porcelain vessels which use the translucency of the material to create bold interplay between transfer-printed blocks of colour and hand drawn lines. Her award winning work is inspired by modernist architecture and Russian abstraction; her pots reminiscent of interiors of rooms and spaces. Architectural space is also conjured by the single dramatic large blue bowl form by Nicholas Rena with its precise edges and dense polished surface.

Janice Tchalenko set a whole new agenda for the studio pottery movement in the 1980s as she moved from creating functional wares in the muted tones typical of the Leach tradition to brilliantly coloured and patterned stonewares. Her bold gestural works also created a new link with industrial production through Dartington and Poole Potteries. Tchalenko strong painterly work is echoed in Felicity Aylieff's beautiful cobalt handthrown bottle form and a series of moulded hand painted beakers created in her studio in Jingdezhen in China.

A different blue theme is picked up in the works of Chun Liao, Rupert Spira and Edmund de Waal. Spira has returned over many years to the formal simplicity of Chinese chun wares with their opal like glazes. A major installation of 96 wall mounted bowls, allows the viewer to immerse in shifting tones of blue akin to listening to variations on a musical theme. Chun Liao's raw edged deep blue, white and ice-blue porcelain vessels also immerse the viewer in changing notes of colour with an added note of harmony struck with an early de Waal celadon vessel with a single slash of blue.

From hand painted decoration to the use of stencils, transfers and rich glazes, exhibiting artists interweave the work of the hand and the machine to shed light on the deep time of blue in ceramic culture. In so doing they reveal its potential as a springboard for a fascinating contemporary art.

Blue and White runs until 5 September, Wed - Sat, 11am - 4pm, by appointment.

For further information please visit our website or email Leigh Sneade at leigh@oxfordceramics.com