

Nina Johnson

Vessels

February 11th - May 1st, 2021



Vessels
Upstairs Gallery
February 11th - May 1st, 2021

When I visited Betty and George in Italy, the first thing I noticed were all the Betty Woodman's littered around the garden, kitchen and studio. We ate off them, she planted in them, and yet, they were inextricably linked to the precious sculptures I had exhibited in the gallery months prior. For her nearly seventy-year career, Betty battled with functionality, finding joy, release and infinite inspiration in using the idea of function as source material. In the years since my visit to her home just outside Florence, I often think of Betty and her fascination with the vessel as subject matter. Most specifically my love of Betty led me to Katie Stout. More on that later.

Over 13 years of gallery exhibitions and one persistent form has continually appeared as an object of desire; the vessel. In all its many forms, this subject never tires. This much regarded, revered and studied form is the genesis of many discussions, exhibitions, publications, and texts, many of which are more scholarly, well researched and surely more responsible than the one I am presenting here.

This exhibition aims to be of the more varietal sort, a vast and random, densely populated network of artists. A group that transcends age, race, and in some instances, even life, yet, somehow the artists within it manage to remain in vividly active conversation with each other. Many consider themselves designers, some architects, some sculptors. Many are dedicated to one media, one persistent conceptual thread, many are not. All are seekers, connecting via tacitly.

Last year, on Valentine's Day, before a pandemic swept the globe, we opened *Sour Tasting Liquid*, Katie Stout's third solo exhibition at the gallery. Among the last works completed were the large scale Patch Vessels. As Katie worked into the wee hours of the morning, we discussed the history of American craft and her relationship to it, we talked about her mother, clay, quilting and weaving. It was clear to me that in this form, she had brought together a series of histories critical not only to her own practice, but to the history of design and craft, fine art and ceramics. This conversation led to many discussions with the myriad of artists and dealers who have contributed works to this exhibition, they gave me hope and happiness in a time of much darkness and isolation.

Bari Zipperstein, Francesca DiMattio, Jasmine Little, Chris Wolston, Katie Stout, MyungJin Kim, Guy Corriero, Misha Kahn, Anders Ruhwald and Katie Stout all produced new works for the show. Each working through distance, illness, homeschool and a myriad of other obligations beyond their commitment to making work. I am infinitely grateful to them for their time and the chance to see their wonderful faces on the other end of a video chat.

Without wrapping this ribbon too tightly, I would like to suggest thinking of Betty at one end of this story, and Katie on the other. Then to suggest visualizing the vast and varied spectrum of voices included in the show existing as an arc between them, each contributing to this arc and creating an open and wonderful space for discussion, criticality and pleasure. I truly hope this exhibition will bring to the viewer as much as the process of creating it has brought to me.

Guy Corriero

Guy Corriero has lived and made art in New York City for the past 30 years. Originally, constructing small paintings and later hand building substantial ceramics sculptures in 2013. In 2020, Guy started to model larger rough-hewn plaster vessels, head-like with big hair or tall arm-handles.

Francesca DiMattio

Francesca DiMattio's (b. 1981) practice combines a cacophony of influences, which she applies in a layered and non-hierarchical approach to her work. In both her sculpture and painting, she discovers ways to weave together the history and artistry of craft, transposing it from a practice of quiet control into one that seems unpredictable, explosive and shifting. Recent solo exhibitions include Boucherouite at Salon 94 Bowery, New York (NY); Francesca DiMattio: Housewares at the Bluffer Art Museum, Houston (TX) and Vertical Arrangements at the Zabłudowicz Collection, London (U.K.). Her work is in the collections of the Miami Art Museum (FL); the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton (NY); the Perez Art Museum, Miami (FL); the Frances Young Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs (NY); the Saatchi Gallery, London (U.K.) and the Zabłudowicz Collection.

Ruth Duckworth

Ruth Duckworth was a British sculptor who was best known for her smooth ceramic works of abstract forms derived from nature. Born Ruth Windmüller on April 10, 1919 in Hamburg, Germany to a Jewish father and Christian mother, she was forced to leave Germany in 1936 and study abroad at the Liverpool College of Art in the United Kingdom due to Nazi restrictions on Jewish students. She initially worked as a tombstone engraver in England, and later moved to Chicago to teach at the University of Chicago in 1964. Her works are in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, among others. Duckworth died on October 18, 2009 in Chicago, IL where she had spent the last 45 years of her life.

Andile Dyalvane

Andile Dyalvane was born in 1978 on a cattle farm in Ngobozana, South Africa and is currently based in Cape Town, South Africa. A leading voice in the field of contemporary ceramic arts, Dyalvane received a National Degree in Art and Design from Sivuyile Technical College in 1999 and a National Degree in Ceramic Design from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2003 and founded Imiso Ceramics in South Africa's Western Cape in 2006. He has exhibited extensively in South Africa and has been awarded residencies in Denmark, France, the United States, and Taiwan. Dyalvane's work is in the permanent collections of the Iziko National Museum, Cape Town, South Africa; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; and Yingge Ceramic Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

Misha Kahn

Born in Duluth, Minnesota in 1989, Kahn graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 2011 with a BFA in Furniture Design. Kahn's practice demonstrates a determination to self-inventing, adapting and furthering processes in a myriad of mediums including metalwork, glass, wood, textiles, ceramic, bronze casting, fiberglass, and cement. His work has been exhibited internationally and is in the permanent collection of museums such as the Corning Museum of Glass, NY; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX and Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, KY. Kahn lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

MyungJin Kim

MyungJin Kim was born in 1975, Daegu, South Korea. She received her MFA in ceramic art at Seoul National University in 2002 after which she moved to Los Angeles. Her ceramic art can be found in the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, OR, The Pizzuti Collection in the Columbus Museum of Art, The Resnick Collection in Los Angeles, The Archie Bray Foundation Collection in Helena, Montana, The Sonny Kamm Teapot Collection in Los Angeles. As well her work can be found in numerous private collections in the United States.

Aranda\Lasch

Aranda\Lasch is a New York and Tucson-based design studio established in 2003 by Benjamin Aranda and Chris Lasch. Recognition includes the United States Artists Award, Young Architects + Designers Award, Design Vanguard Award, AD Innovators, and the Architectural League Emerging Voices Award. Their early projects are the subject of the book, Tooling. Aranda\Lasch has exhibited internationally in galleries, museums, design fairs and biennials. Their work is part of the permanent collection of the MoMA in New York.

Jasmine Little

Jasmine Little (b. 1984) lives and works in Colorado. She has recently exhibited Marianne Boesky in Aspen; Night Gallery in Los Angeles, CA; Galerie Dumonteil, Shanghai, China; Johannes Vogt, New York, NY; Lefebvre & Fils, Paris, France; Tif Sigfrids, Athens, GA; and Five Car Garage, Santa Monica, CA. She has been featured in numerous publications including The Aspen Times, Whitewall, Artillery, New American Paintings and LA Weekly. Her work is included in the Smithsonian collection of American Art.

Leza McVey

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Leza Marie McVey (née Sullivan) (1907–1984) was an innovative American ceramist and weaver. McVey studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art (1927–1932) and at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center (1943–1944). In 1932, she married the sculptor William Mozart McVey who accepted a teaching position at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan in 1947 where she met and befriended Finnish artist Maija Grotell and Toshiko Takaezu. In 1953, McVey returned to her native city of Cleveland and established her studio in the suburb of Pepper Pike, Ohio. McVey's large-scaled, biomorphic, asymmetrical work is said to reflect her dissatisfaction with wheel-thrown pieces and to have led the way for modern ceramic art in the United States. By 1979 McVey's production slowed due to her failing eyesight. She died peacefully at home in 1984, survived by Bill, who died in 1995.

Ruby Neri

Ruby Neri's practice is linked to the San Francisco Bay-area Mission School and a strong lineage of artists pushing the boundaries of ceramics such as Betty Woodman, Robert Arneson, and Viola Frey. Her work maintains an unabashed embrace of "funk" and graffiti, sensibilities that push new methods of depicting the female figure. The blonde hair of these figures allude to associations of women on the brink of self-destruction.

Anders Ruhwald

Anders Herwald Ruhwald is a Danish American sculptor and installation artist whose practice is grounded in ceramics. He lives and works between Detroit and Chicago and received his MFA from the Royal College of Art in London in 2005. Ruhwald has exhibited widely around the world and his work is represented in major collections including The Victoria and Albert Museum (UK), Musée des Arts décoratifs (France), The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago and The National Museum (Sweden). Currently he is a visiting professor at the National Academy of Arts in Oslo, Norway.

Peter Shire

Peter Shire is an LA-based artist whose work eludes all attempts at categorization. He has created ceramics, furniture, toys, interior designs, and public sculptures, that seem to at once reference and parody influences such as Bauhaus, Futurism, Art Nouveau and Art Deco. This subversive humor and playfulness extend throughout his work and made him a natural fit for the controversial and iconic Milan-based Memphis design group, of which he was a founding member. A graduate of the famous Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, Peter Shire has an impressive exhibition record. In addition to many group shows, his works have been exhibited in numerous solo shows, in his hometown, Los Angeles, nationally and internationally in Milan, Paris, Tokyo and Sapporo. Shire's works are in many public collections and museums in the U.S. and abroad.

Ettore Sottsass

One of the most significant counter-forces to modernism in design history, Ettore Sottsass (Innsbruck, Austria, 1917- Milan, Italy, 2007) brought his powerful artistic vision to a comprehensive range of disciplines: architecture, ceramics, furniture, glass, painting, photography, and industrial design. His syncretic approach to design informed his contribution and involvement in a number of avant garde groups and projects, including Global Tools, Studio Alchimia, and the Milanese avant garde project Memphis, which he founded in 1981. Sottsass' work can be found in the permanent collections of numerous international museums, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Corning Museum of Glass, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; M+ Museum, Hong Kong, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Katie Stout

Katie Stout is regarded as one of the leading designers of her generation, her works have been featured in T Magazine, the New York Times, Apartmento, Artforum and numerous other publications. Her works have been widely exhibited in institutions ranging from the Anderson Ranch Art Center, to the Schloss Hollenegg in Austria, to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where her work is included in the permanent collection. Katie's first solo exhibition was in Miami with Nina Johnson (then Gallery Diet) in 2015.

Chris Wolston

Chris Wolston is an American artist and designer based in Brooklyn, New York and Medellín, Colombia. After receiving a Fulbright grant to study pre-Columbian ceramics, he established his studio in Medellín to continue his collaboration with local artisans. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Museum of American Glass, The Museo de Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia and the National Museum of Qatar.

Beatrice Wood

Beatrice Wood (1893–1998) was a painter, draughtsman, and sculptor best known for her luster-glazed ceramic works. Born in New York to a well-to-do family, Wood studied acting at the Comédie Française and painting at the Académie Julian. She was friends with Marcel Duchamp and Henri Roche, with whom she founded the prominent Dadaist magazine *Blind Man*; she was also part of a circle of artists and writers who frequented the home of the Modern Art collectors Louise and Walter Arensberg. In 1947 she relocated to Ojai, California, where she lived for the rest of her life. Her ceramics and drawings continue to inspire generations of the artists and freethinkers.

Betty Woodman

Betty Woodman was a ceramic artist best known for her exuberantly colorful and inventive work which gained recognition in the early 1970s. She often worked with a deconstructed version of the traditional ceramic vessel, with her pieces ranging from massive site-specific murals to fragmentary columns and carpet-like floor pieces. In its use of color and pattern, Woodman's early work can be seen as a reaction to the overwhelmingly austere Minimalist and Conceptual aesthetic prevalent at the time. Born on May 14, 1930 in Norwalk, CT, she studied art at Alfred University, and was notably the mother of the celebrated late photographer Francesca Woodman. Betty Woodman's works can be found in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, among others. She died on January 3, 2018 at the age of 87.

Bari Ziperstein

Bari Ziperstein is a Chicago-born artist based in Los Angeles, California working in mixed media sculpture with a primary focus in ceramics. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Santa Barbara, CA; Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art, Rancho Cucamonga, CA; The San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco, CA (2005); and the American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA; as well as in recent solo exhibitions at Charles Moffett Gallery, New York, NY and Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Bari has been recognized by numerous grantmaking organizations in California and has been awarded residencies such as Anderson Ranch, Snowmass Village, CO (2012) and the Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT (2001).

About Nina Johnson

Nina Johnson is a contemporary art space in Miami, Florida. Opened as Gallery Diet in 2007, the gallery has produced exhibitions by emerging and established artists from around the world, including Terry Allen, Anna Betbeze, Judy Chicago, Ann Craven, Jim Drain, Awol Erizku, Derek Fordjour, Nicola L., Nicolas Lobo, Nevine Mahmoud, Jonas Mekas, Cassi Namoda, Eamon Ore-Giron, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Peter Shire, Katie Stout, and Betty Woodman. The gallery is located at 6315 NW 2nd Avenue Miami in the Little Haiti district.