

smooth-shaven Greek, and the two-faced Judas, the nearest apostle in the picture on p.136, is covered in lascivious lips. *Doubting Thomas* stands with three of the multitude (*previous page*) who were 'confounded because every man heard the speech of his own language'. He is covered with blood-sucking appendages 'sucking the blood from Christ like any doubter sucking energy from those who believe' wrote Pope.

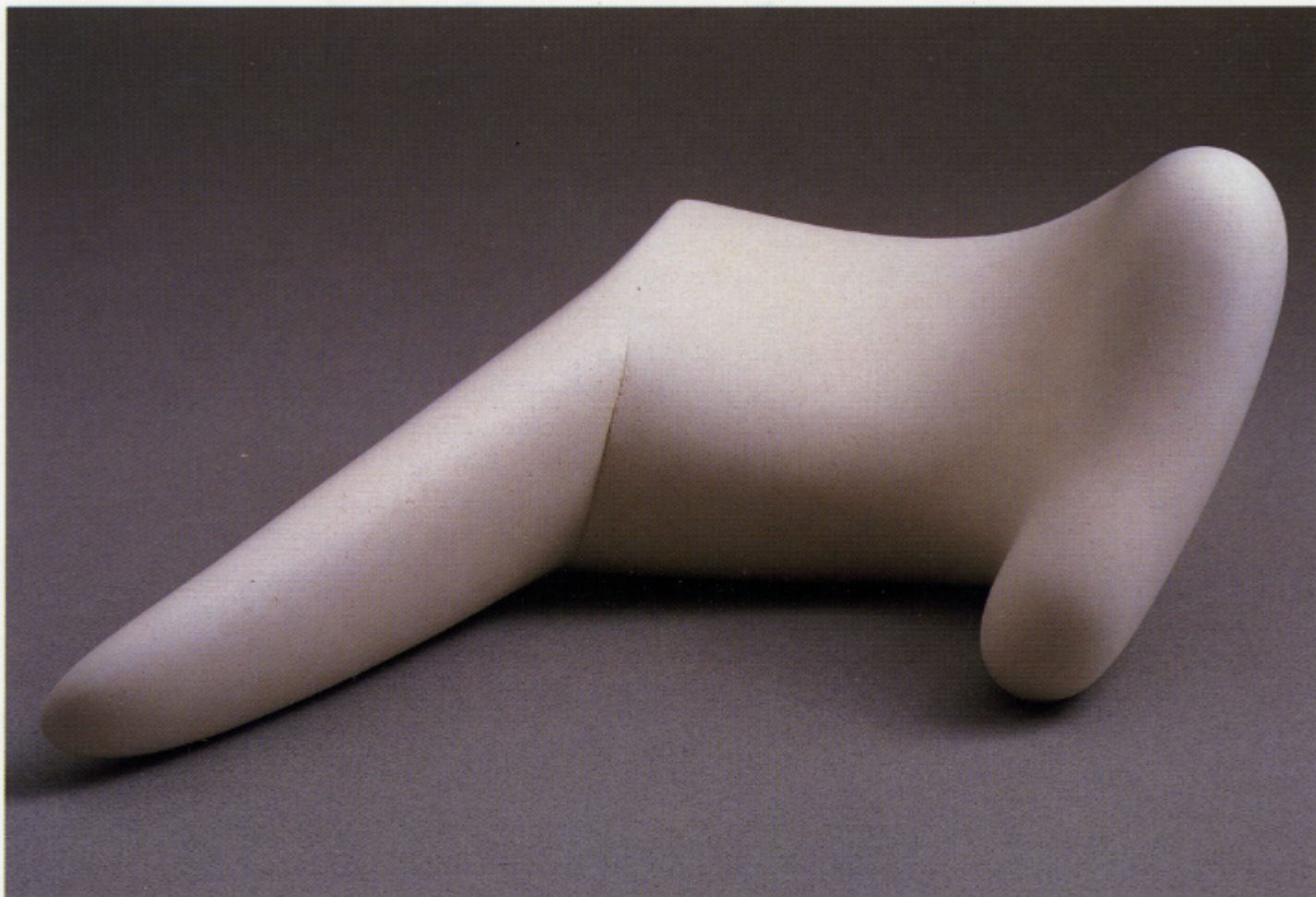
These simple hollow vessels, the method of construction undisguised, have become the containers of a deep and mysterious symbolism. They were envisaged by Pope to be experienced as part of an ambitious project which would place them in a chapel with tunnels and chambers lit by the lamps of the apostles and called *The Oratory of Heavenly Space*.

While the forms of Nicholas Pope are not in any sense realistic they carry with them a familiar narrative and some knowledge of the human qualities of the characters.

Deidre McLoughlin *Old Ecstasy*, 62 x 25 x 30 cm (24 x 10 x 12 in.), 1998
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The sculptures of Deidre McLoughlin do not overtly tell a story. She uses clay to make organic forms which she describes as bimorphic, a term often used to describe the work, among others, of Hans Arp and Brancusi, both of whom included carving in marble in their oeuvres. Some of Deidre McLoughlin's





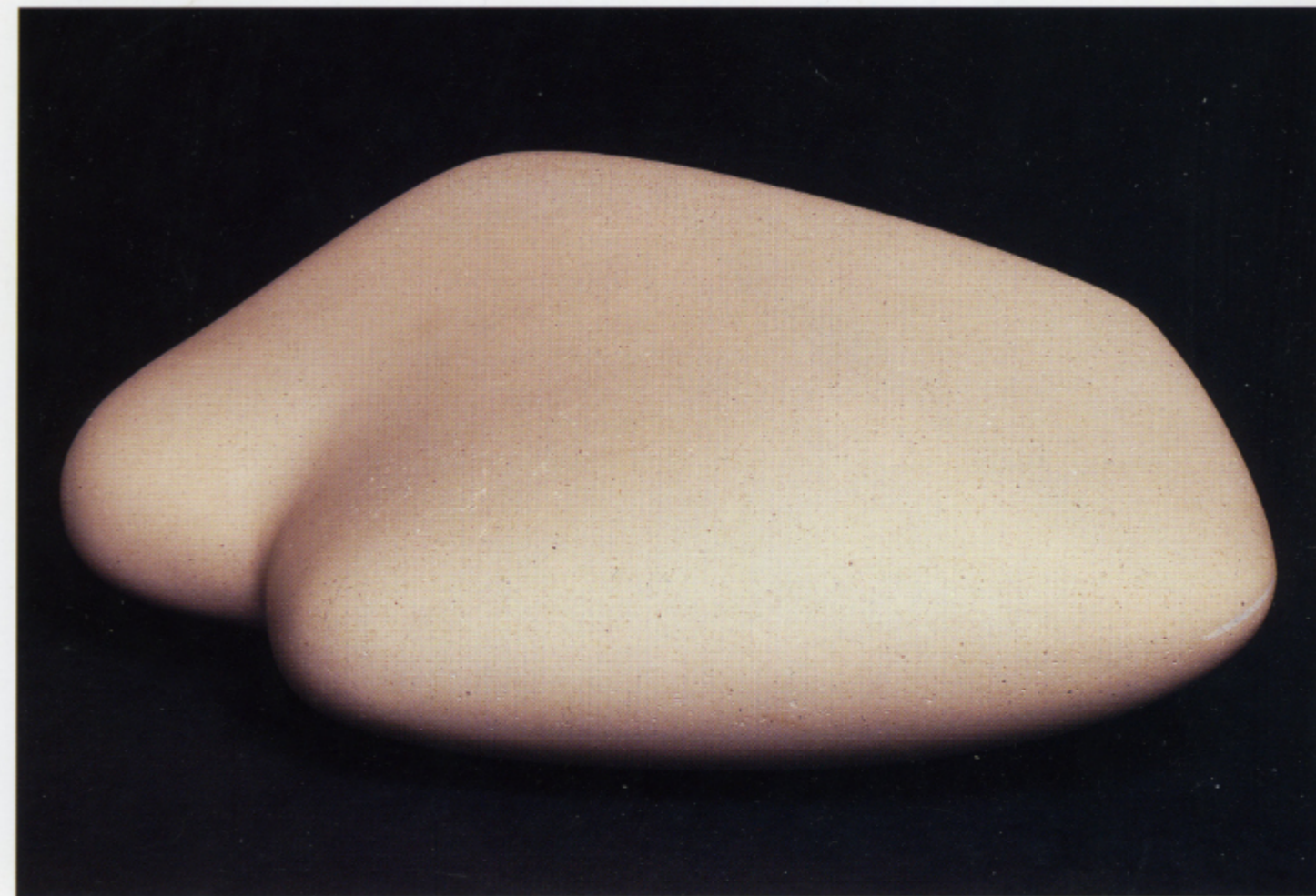
Deidre McLoughlin, *Kuai*,
32 x 24 x 14 cm (13 x 10
x 6 in.), 1996

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE
ARTIST

ceramic forms have the smooth, pared down, precise simplicity of the results of that process.

Her working method is, of course, quite different, starting with the soft, shapeless material of clay. She starts roughly as she goes backwards and forwards on a piece, turning the shape over, supporting it with clay and foam and keeping it smooth enough to see where she is going. Finally a shape comes 'alive' and the tension within it is realised by paring down and grinding back the surface until the flexibility with which she works is totally obliterated. In manipulating the clay she is searching for a form that surprises her and makes 'sense' – a sense which she does not immediately understand. Later, perhaps, she may recognise where a shape has come from as particular resonances with events in her life mingle with other possible meanings.

The titles McLoughlin uses are not directly explanatory; the stoneware sculpture called *Old Ecstasy*, is one of a series (*opposite*) which grew out of the pain she felt for the long years of her father's dying. In abstraction it is a form that curves back on itself, becoming a curved, narrowing, notched, blunt-ended shape. However, there is, as in almost all her work, a subtle allusion to a living being, for it also reads as a sleeping head resting on a pillow. The cavity enclosed by the rounded 'head' allows a shadow to be cast on the cut-out margin to



Deidre McLoughlin, *Kiss-Silence*, 54 x 36 x 20 cm
(21 ¼ x 14 ¼ x 8 in.), 1998

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE
ARTIST

indicate discreetly eyes, nose and mouth. The balance of the piece is finely tuned, as the form lifts from the ground and remains suspended above it.

The smaller, high-fired, polished form (*previous page*) made of T-material is called *Kuai*. It can be read as an abstraction but there is also a strong anatomical suggestiveness about it. Is it a half-reclining figure, with leg outstretched, and a faceless head? Is it a headless torso with arm outstretched and a tilted pelvis? Or is it a three-dimensional shape playing soft, rounded forms against angular ones, curves against lines, shadow against light? It illustrates the artist's search for the tension which lies between rigidity and softness, and the biomorphic balance between the abstract and the figurative.

Kiss-Silence belongs to the same series as *Old Ecstasy*. Is this also a head lying as though on a pillow, or is it the pillow itself? It relates so elusively to both object and living form that the ambiguities and meanings which each of us may sense are best left unsaid, as the artist must have intended.