

Objects of *containment*

Frances McDonald explores *Contained | Contenu* at the Musée Ariana in Switzerland, an exhibition featuring seven artists exploring ideas of interior and exterior space through ceramics and glass



Currently showing at the Musée Ariana in Geneva, Switzerland, *Contained | Contenu* reminds us that the physical continues to be the point of departure for those who work in ceramics (and indeed other craft disciplines). However, while intrinsic and central, artists also reach inside and beyond the physicality of an object to unearth layers of meaning within the metaphysical – as this exhibition skillfully demonstrates.

Offering seven contrasting voices working in both ceramics and glass, *Contained | Contenu* is divided into two rooms, the first of which features three internationally renowned ceramic artists. Their confident works immediately command attention. On one side, ceramics by Belgian artist Anne Marie Laureys exude emotional energy, suggesting multiple meanings within the exhibition's overall theme. Initially throwing a classic, symmetrical pot, an object of controlled containment, Laureys then disrupts function by pulling, folding, pinching and altering the clay, remoulding and refolding it over and over again. The resulting sculpture is a highly tactile form that embodies the physical exploration that has taken place.

MATERIAL CONFIDENCE

Sitting together on the other side of the room, works by Alison Britton and the Norwegian artist, Marit Tingleff, dominate their respective spaces. Britton was one of an influential group of students who came out of the Royal College of Art in the 1970s; the works selected for this exhibition date from various periods of her career. However, all possess the authority and confidence of an artist totally at ease with her materials. Britton is very attracted to the notion of containment, stating when shortlisted for the *Women's Hour Craft Prize* in 2017, that: 'For me, it's both psychological and the visual thing of that dark hollow. Having an inside and an outside is very compelling.' This exhibition includes *Green Jar* from a 1998 solo show, alongside more recent works and new pieces such as *Freight*: a wide vessel with an intriguing second contained section.

Like Britton, Marit Tingleff also employs the ceramic form as her canvas, her painterly application of glazes referencing nature, land and seascapes. Three of her large-scale ceramic plates are featured in this exhibition. Embracing ordinary, everyday objects, Tingleff has elevated them to something much more powerful as they reference the landscapes of her life. For *Contained | Contenu*, she has also created a series of double-walled vessels. Initially viewed as objects of containment, function is subverted by the inclusion of holes, which invite new perspectives as they are viewed from different angles

On encountering Deirdre McLoughlin's work in room two, one is again reminded of the notion of a work being rooted in place. Here we see two pieces from her *Waterwork* series. McLoughlin has written that this new series, with its dark, glistening inner glazes, probably came from her daily

journey to and from her studio, which takes her along the banks of the IJ waterway in Amsterdam where she 'breathes in its atmosphere, its depth and expanse.'

CONTRASTING NARRATIVES

Recent visitors to the Design Museum in London will have seen McLoughlin's *Waterwork I*, a finalist for this year's *LOEWE Craft Prize*. The writer Eleanor Flegg remarked in her 2015 profile of McLoughlin in *Ceramic Review* that 'I cannot see Deirdre McLoughlin's work without weaving stories around it.' While the narrative around her work is dark and intense (contrasting with Richard Meitner's adjacent brightly coloured abstract studies), Andrea Walsh's intimate objects of containment offer us something completely different. Her exquisite fine bone china objects nestle quietly within cast glass containers, their presence in the exhibition offering a moment of restrained contemplation alongside Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert's ethereal glass vessels.

Contained | Contenu is co-curated by Monique Deul, founder and director of Taste Contemporary, and Ana Quintero Pérez from Musée Ariana. For many years the museum has initiated partnerships with galleries as a way of highlighting works by internationally acclaimed artists who have contributed to the canon of contemporary ceramics and glass. This collaboration with Monique Deul has provided the ideal opportunity to do just that.

Objects travel through many stages in their lives; they emerge during the making process, before moving on to exhibition and its accompanying discourse. This is followed by ownership or even ownerships. While the overall theme of containment is expressed in various ways through the work shown here, one wonders if intentions are further altered as these pieces spend time in the company of one another in Musée Ariana. If so, yet more layers of meaning will be added to already complex objects. 

Contained | Contenu is at Musée Ariana, Geneva, until 7 October; ariana-geneve.ch; tastecontemporary.com

PREVIOUS PAGE: Andrea Walsh, *Pair of Contained Boxes – Clear Frit and Gold, Yellow Frit and White*
RIGHT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Anne Marie Laureys, *Cloud by my Fingers No 2*; Alison Britton, *Flute*; Richard Meitner, *Aucune Idée*; Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert, *Vessels*; Marit Tingleff, *Doubles – Red and White 1*; Deirdre McLoughlin, *Red Life III*

