

Alison Britton: Content and Form

26 January – 4 September 2016



Alison Britton: Content and Form presents a survey of work by ceramic artist Alison Britton, spanning her career over the last 40 years. More than 60 pieces will be brought together in a retrospective in the V&A's ceramic galleries, charting the evolution of Britton's practice through a series of key moments or phases including her most recent body of work made in 2015, shown for the first time.

The V&A has collected Britton's work since the late 1970s. This retrospective follows an additional gift to the Museum in 2014 of nine pots from Britton's long-standing collector Ed Wolf, who has also loaned a number of works. The Ed Wolf Collection will be celebrated through a selection of pots displayed in an echo of the collection's unfussy arrangement on the boardroom shelves of Wolf's north London business. Additional works will be loaned from the artist's studio, and from other private collections.

Britton rose to prominence in the 1970s as part of a loosely affiliated group of women potters who had trained at the Royal College of Art, whose work challenged established traditions. Britton has continually explored the ceramic container throughout her career. Her pots challenge our assumptions about craft, function and ornamentation. On display will be pieces that manipulate the everyday forms of the jug, jar and bowl, pushing them to the edge of functionality, such as *Flat backed Jug with Stork* (1978).

The display will also highlight the union of sculpture and painting in Britton's colourful work. Her earlier pictorial decoration shifts to abstract mark-making in works such as *White and Brown Pot, Big Spout* (1990). A later series of pieces will be shown which explore the theme of 'flow'. The titles of these works such as *Outpour* (2012) refer to the containment and movement of water, also implied by the presence of pipe-like appendages on these objects. This collection also demonstrates Britton's later experimentation with the technique of pouring rather than spraying and painting glazes and slips, extending the idea of liquidity through her treatment of surfaces.

Alison Britton says: "It is an exceptional opportunity to gather these pots together and show them in the V&A. The longer I work, the more I am intrigued by putting things alongside each other that were made at very different times, showing how my work has continuously changed in small ways through almost 40 years. The improvised relationship between the painted surface and the irregular form is what continues to engage me".

Alun Graves, Senior Curator at the V&A, says of Britton's work: "*Alison is one of the leading ceramic artists of her generation – a pivotal figure who helped to redefine the course of craft practice in the late 20th century. The V&A retrospective, which has the Museum's collection at its core, offers an unparalleled opportunity to witness the brilliance of Britton's constantly evolving work across four decades*".

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- *Alison Britton: Content and Form* will be shown at the V&A in gallery 146, from 26 January – 4 September 2016. Admission free.
- The V&A houses one of the most comprehensive collection of ceramics in the world, particularly rich in ceramics from Asia, the Middle East and Europe. The new Ceramics galleries were opened in September 2009 following a complete redisplay.
- The V&A is open daily from 10.00 to 17.45 and until 22.00 on Fridays.

For further PRESS information or images please contact Nina Sandhaus in the V&A press office on 0207 942 2502 or email n.sandhaus@vam.ac.uk