

'California high kitsch': Peter Shire's ceramics travel to New York's Derek Eller Gallery

DESIGN / 27 SEP 2016 / BY CATHERINE SHAW



Peter Shire's sculptures and objects are currently the subject of an exhibition at Derek Eller Gallery in New York.
Pictured: installation view

INFORMATION

'A Survey of Ceramics: 1970s to the Present' is on view until 9 October. For more information, visit the Derek Eller Gallery website (<http://www.derekeller.com/>)

ADDRESS

Derek Eller Gallery
300 Broome Street
New York, NY 10002

TELEPHONE

1.212.206.6411

Peter Shire's earliest encounters with mid-century modern design in Los Angeles were as a young boy, driving down Sunset Boulevard. Looking out of his family's car window as they drove to the beach, it was one storefront in particular that inspired the young Shire: John Lautner's iconic Googie coffee shop on the corner of Sunset and Crescent Heights. Though Lautner's design was demolished in 1989, it left an indelible impression on Shire, an aesthetic he dubbed 'California high kitsch'.

The aesthetic influence of Lautner's Googie architecture – as well as aspects of cubism, futurism and Bauhaus – is visible in Shire's sculptures and objects, with their sense of play and absurdity. In Shire's category-defying ceramic works in particular – now the subject of a beautiful survey show at Derek Eller Gallery – these interests intertwine in both structure and sentiment, the possibilities of clay giving Shire the opportunity to push his radical approach to design to its limits. The glorious table-top exhibition contains examples of Shire's work from the 1970s to 2016, demonstrating both his mastery of mechanics and ability to making you belly laugh with his antithetical objects and sculptures, that include his take on can openers, magnets and shapes inspired by scorpions.

It's ironic that it was a coffee shop that first piqued Shire's interest, since he is perhaps best known for his teapots. It was these that caught the attention of Ettore Sottsass, who invited to join Memphis in Milan in the 1980s. Even after was these that caught the attention of Ettore Sottsass, who invited to join Memphis in Milan in the 1980s. Even after this period, Shire continued to think about teapots, and some remarkable examples are on display at Derek Eller Gallery, including *Guitar* (1979) and *Mr Peanut Yellow* (1996).