

Art in America



Peter Shire

at Derek Eller,
through Oct. 9
300 Broome Street

Dozens of bright, asymmetrical sculptures by Los Angeles-based artist Peter Shire crowd three low white tables in "A Survey of Ceramics: 1970s to the Present" at Derek Eller, making a strong case for a revival of kitschy '80s aesthetics. An original member of the Memphis group founded by Ettore Sottsass in Milan in 1981, Shire has continued that collective's postmodernist vision by working with an irreverent, pluralistic approach to ceramics. The varied work on view here includes many permutations of the teapot, a central motif in his career, as well as sculptures with no pretense to functionality. The pieces reference the work of Shire's fellow Californian "Post-Pottery" artists like Ron Nagle and Peter Voulkos. "Same Inside As Out" (1975), a series of cups with jagged handles and swirling green underglaze, are both pretty and menacing. This duality is best expressed in three "Scorpion" sculptures in black, white, and gray. They evoke the fierceness of the arachnid with saw-toothed ceramic tails poised to sting, but they also suggest a set of watering cans—the "heads" are spouts with poked holes. —*Julia Wolkoff*

Pictured: View of Peter Shire's exhibition "A Survey of Ceramics: 1970s to the Present." Courtesy Derek Eller, New York.