

PETER SHIRE

A Survey of Ceramics: 1970s to the Present

September 8 - October 9, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday, September 8, 6-8pm



Peter Shire, *Scorpion Black*, 1996 - 2013, cone 06 clay and underglazes, 12" x 31.5" x 12"

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of ceramic works by Peter Shire. Shire rose to prominence as a member of Memphis, the Milan-based design collective which thrived in the 1980s. The gallery will exhibit work from this period, along with teapots, cups, and sculptures dated before and after, in an effort to build a complete narrative of Shire's career-long relationship with clay.

Peter Shire has lived in Los Angeles and worked in ceramic for all of his life. The immediacy of clay has provided an outlet for an aesthetic built from particularly Californian influences as

disparate and exuberant as hot rod culture (the mechanic Bob Hayes was a childhood neighbor) and Ken Price's 1969 solo exhibition at Mizuno Gallery which Shire visited in his youth. Along with Price, Post-Pottery artists such as Ron Nagle, John Mason and Peter Volkous helped shape his euphoric, absurd and irreverent relationship to functionality and informed his pluralistic approach to producing art.

While his work borrows from Futurist and Bauhaus design (notably Marianne Brandt's seminal silver teapot), the aura of the work is playfully rooted in the garish second and third iterations of Modernism. He recalls frequently passing John Lautner's Googie coffee shop on Sunset Boulevard on his way to the beach as a child. This Mid-Century modern storefront with a large, protruding, striped fin embodied what Shire describes as the "California high kitsch" aesthetic, a particular brand of kitsch imitating modernism. That a conventional design (in this instance a roadside cafe) could be radicalized by such ecstatic and boisterous additive process has had a lasting effect on Shire's vision.

In February 1977, Shire's teapots were featured in *Wet Magazine*, Leonard Koren's *New Wave* publication. With contributions from artists such as Matt Groening, Kim Jones, Gary Panter, and Teruhiko Yumura, *Wet* captured the zeitgeist of Los Angeles in the 70s and 80s that included Shire's ceramics. Three curiously geometric teapots featured therein caught the eye of Italian designer Ettore Sottsass who asked Shire to join Memphis. From 1981-88, he contributed and collaborated on each collection from the group that famously shaped the popular Post-Modern aesthetic of the era.

In Memphis and throughout Shire's career, he has produced objects ranging from public sculptures to divans, yet he continues to return to the teapot. For Shire, the teapot remains a

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unique engineering challenge (the physics of ensuring the last drop comes out), as well as a reminder of his beginnings. He has made countless variations and permutations of the vessel, some obvious in their function and others deceptively abstract. *Guitar*, 1970, is a reductive cubist-inspired piece with muted pastel colors that possesses a clear and definable spout and handle, whereas *Mr. Peanut Yellow*, 1996, is a dizzying composite of spirals, cones and geometric shapes coyly concealing its objective. Along with cups and sculptures, the gallery exhibition will include a number of teapots to display the rigorous experimentation and curiosity that has guided Shire's career.

Peter Shire's work will be the focus of a concurrent exhibition at The Jewish Museum, New York, opening September 2016. His work is in a number of public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and The Seattle Museum of Art. In 2016 he mounted a solo exhibition at Peres Projects, Berlin, and he has recently been featured in exhibitions at Venus Over Los Angeles, Los Angeles, Office Baroque, Brussels, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, and A + D Museum, Los Angeles.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Hours are Wednesday-Sunday from 11am to 6pm and Tuesday by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com