



## These 20 Artists Are Shaping the Future of Ceramics

**ARTSY EDITORIAL  
BY CASEY LESSER**

FEB 23RD, 2017 1:54 AM

Artists and artisans working with ceramics have steadily contributed to the art world for centuries. From prehistoric pottery to ancient Greek amphoras, from the rise of porcelain in Asia and Europe to the Arts and Crafts movement in England and the U.S., ceramic traditions have long fascinated artists and infiltrated their practices. In the contemporary art world, this was never more clear than in 2014, when ceramics arguably achieved peak popularity.

At the Whitney Biennial that year, the ceramics of Sterling Ruby and Shio Kusaka were featured prominently; the de Purys curated a show of leading ceramic artists at Venus Over Manhattan; and at major fairs like Frieze and Art Basel, galleries punctuated their presentations with pots by Dan McCarthy and Takuro Kuwata, and the figurative sculptures of Rachel Kneebone and Klara Kristalova.

It was within this context that older living artists who have long championed the medium, like Betty Woodman, Ken Price, Arlene Schechet, and Ron Nagle, saw a resurgence; and younger artists like Jesse Wine, Rose Eken, Elizabeth Jaeger, and Jennie Jieun Lee found a market. And while the trend has tapered off somewhat, enthusiasm for ceramics remains strong and artists working in the medium continue to maintain a steady foothold in art-world venues.

“Ceramics is a medium that, with every passing decade, becomes easier for the untrained to manipulate—more rampant, versatile, and demystified, and perhaps more worthy of a clarified position within the wider history of sculpture,” says the British ceramist Aaron Angell, who set up a pottery studio in London in 2014 to teach fellow artists. “I feel that fired clay deserves better than to be indelibly colored by allusions to (not) being useful, the foggy world of craft, or the masturbatory hermetics of the master potter,” he adds.

And he’s by no means alone. Countless artists today are shifting the perception of ceramics, ensuring that whether taking the shape of a functional vessel or an explosive sculpture, the art form receives its due respect and recognition. Below, we share the work of 20 living ceramic artists, as they each share why they’re passionate about clay.

# Elisabeth Kley

B. 1956, NEW YORK • LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK



Elisabeth Kley, *Tulip*, 2016. Courtesy of CANADA.



Elisabeth Kley, *Pineapple*, 2016. Courtesy of CANADA.

Kley has developed a following for her festive, hand-built vessels inspired by the decorative traditions of Islamic, Byzantine, and Asian art and design, as well as the patterning of the Wiener Werkstätte, a Vienna production community of the early 1900s. “I was drawn to ceramics because it seemed to offer freedom from the historical baggage that burdened painting,” Kley says. “I was also attracted to the light and color that often seems to pour out of a museum room full of Islamic pottery or European faience.”

Kley builds her unmistakable urns and flasks with coils of clay, then smooths them out, applies homemade underglazes, and scrapes away parts to add decorative sgraffito designs, like flowers and calligraphic motifs. Currently featured at Pierre Marie Giraud in Brussels, the artist also shows with CANADA in New York, and will be included in the gallery’s Frieze New York presentation this spring.