

## A PASSION FOR FORM

Opening Reception: Thursday 28 July, 6 – 8pm  
Exhibition Dates: 28 July – 27 August 2022

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*A Passion for Form* presents a selection of ceramic and fabric artworks from the collection of Dr Brian Harding and is the first public exhibition of the collection. Featuring pieces from esteemed artists and craftspeople Dame Magdalene Odundo OBE, Jennifer Lee OBE, Peter Collingwood OBE and Hans Coper, each of whom have brought craft to a contemporary art audience through their innovative and idiosyncratic techniques and mastery over their chosen materials.

For over four decades, Harding has built an eclectic collection of art with a focus on tactile objects which is displayed in his home in the company of understated twentieth-century interior design. Taking no notice of trends, Harding's collecting has instead been driven by his commitment to acquiring work by a select handful of artists across their careers. As a result, every room in his home has become a snapshot into the archive of each artist, revealing their developing practices in a way rarely seen in public collections.

Ceramics, often kept behind display cases for fear of their fragility, here bask confidently atop transparent surfaces, chests of drawers and above cupboards, creating unexpected and unmediated encounters. Undaunted by the delicate nature of the objects which fill his home, Harding directly contravenes the popular wisdom of museum practices, confident in the knowledge that the true pleasure of these works comes from the haptic encounter.

In place of neutral white walls, wall hangings - artworks in their own right - create dynamic backdrops for sculptural ceramics, with curated vignettes appearing at every angle. The softness of these hangings is contrasted in their linear geometry. Like the furniture which occupies each room, modernity, and beauty are their defining features.

*A Passion for Form* seeks to stay true to the motivations behind the forms of display within Harding's home while placing the works in a new environment where they are accessible to a broader audience.

## Notes to editor

### Exhibition Design by Theodore Vass

**Dame Magdalene Odundo OBE** (b. Kenya, 1950) is internationally recognized for her elegant and evocative vessels that straddle the gap between abstraction and subtle figuration. Odundo's pots are not thrown but built; she uses her fingertips to shape the clay, in a process known as coiling. Her pots are then smoothed, polished, and covered in slip before being fired, giving them their distinctive black and orange markings. Her work features prominently in the permanent collections of the British Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York; the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.; and the Art Institute of Chicago. Odundo's works are on view in *The Milk of Dreams*, 59<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

**Jennifer Lee OBE** (b. Scotland, 1956) has produced a body of work which, like the geological processes it evokes, has evolved slowly since she began working as a ceramic artist in the early 1980s, after completing her studies at the Edinburgh College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. She has limited her explorations to bowl and vessel forms but has found freedom within these self-imposed constraints. Through concentrated effort, Lee has expanded the borders of her artistic production; as the years pass, her work has grown increasingly refined and disciplined. Carefully considered asymmetries disturb the equilibrium of her vessels, and add to their elegance. These irregularities of form echo how her pieces function within space, an important component of Lee's work.

**Peter Collingwood OBE** (b. England, 1922-2008) was an outstanding British weaver. His many textiles, rugs, and 'macrogauzes' are accompanied by numerous books on weaving, notably *The Techniques of Rug Weaving* that has become a handbook of the field. Always talented with his hands, Collingwood stumbled across a loom in an occupational therapy department of a hospital and set about trying to unpick its technical secrets. Two years in the army surprisingly gave him abundant opportunity to weave, as he built a portable loom and would travel in an army ambulance weaving scarves. Collingwood always let the technical side of weaving guide the aesthetic result: 'I try to exploit what a technique will give me rather than impose a design on a technique.' Collingwood's material inventions are epitomized in his 'macrogauze' hangings, where twisted and crossed threads are mapped in intricate artistic designs, enabled by a warp-dominant loom that he made himself.

**Hans Coper** (b. Germany, 1920-1981) was a German-born British potter who became a dominant figure in European pottery and who perpetuated a distinctly European tradition. Coper studied engineering in Germany before turning to painting and sculpture. He then went to Britain and, inspired by Lucie Rie, turned to pottery, producing work that was sculptural and sometimes figurative. Coper taught at the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts and at the Royal College of Art, influencing many students of ceramics.

**Maximillian William** began with an itinerant model which allowed the gallery to gradually form a roster of contemporary artists. An impulse to expand alongside

the advancing careers of these artists led to the establishment of a permanent gallery space in Fitzrovia in 2019. The gallery is artist-centric, collaborating closely with those it supports to build their platforms. On occasion, the gallery seeks to produce exhibitions that highlight those who have influenced its creative community, with the aim of presenting pivotal figures to a new generation. Alongside exhibition making, the gallery is committed to publishing, producing a range of publications from artist books to exhibition catalogues and monographs. The distribution of literature is key to the gallery's commitment to improving accessibility to contemporary art. Publications by the gallery are held in the archives of MoMA and Tate.

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