



## **BLACKSTON**

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### **VESSELS – March 26<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015**

Blackston is delighted to present **Vessels**, an exhibition featuring ceramic works by artists **Polly Apfelbaum, Ivin Ballen, Lynda Benglis, Sean Bluechel, Guy Corriero, Joanne Greenbaum, Roger Herman, Matthias Merkel Hess, Elizabeth Jaeger, Leah James, Essye Klempner, Linda Matalon, Sarah Mattes, JJ PEET, Meghan Petras, Bruce M. Sherman, Simone Shubuck, Ben Suga, Betty Woodman.**

This exhibition embraces the marked and increased inclusion of ceramics by artists, particularly sculptors and painters, in their current art practices - and the general acceptance and exploration of the medium in contemporary art via exhibitions at galleries and arts institutions. Included in the show is a broad range of ceramic work by artists who have always utilized the medium as a significant component of their primary practice - particularly Bruce M. Sherman and Betty Woodman -- and works by emerging and established artists, such as Lynda Benglis, considering ceramics in their practice in tandem with painting/drawing/sculpting (which they are better known for).

Historical constraints and definitions associated with particular mediums in art are undeniably loosening. While traditionally relegated to craft or the realm of trained ceramic masters, increasingly clay is a vehicle for an underlying conceptual seeking. A desk set by JJ PEET and the wall works of Polly Apfelbaum and Ivin Ballen come out of this connection to pottery as a part of a broader practice and process. Sean Bluechel's use of ceramics (alongside painting or photography or installation) serves directly as a means to put forth a visual message.

At the core of working with clay, and glazing, resides the possibility of exploring and reconciling concerns of composition and engagement. Tactility provides a method for understanding and organizing the value of image. Clay also functions in the studio as a humble device for working out ideas -- and equally as an outlet. Glazing offers elements of intrigue, the unknown, chance, success or failure.

In the studio, it seems the vessel, whether literal or metaphorical, is also closely considered: an inadvertent or intentional connection of the individual to human history, lineage and function. Vessels, as a primal form, nod to beauty, utility and humility all at once, can also serve a metaphorical purpose relating to concerns of identity and social nomenclature. And then, too, most of the actual vessels in this exhibition also function as such (flowers and plants have been put to work and are not taboo).

The many works here are presented on a mix of basic, quite inelegant desks as a response to the more standard and slightly rarefied pedestal: a wink of support for the inner workings of this process.

Whether entirely utilitarian or not, the ceramics in *Vessels* point to the fluid use of the medium as a real vein for thought and creative rigor. The idea that ceramic mastery solely rests in the realm of lifelong ceramic practitioners has been muddied to great effect - and there is no going back.