

Edge to Edge

Friday, 22 April, 2016 | Portfolio Chat with Yuval Saar | Translated from Hebrew



I don't think it is necessary to stick flowers in any object that resembles a vase says metalsmith Adi Toch, who co-curates with Tamar de Vries Winter the exhibition *Edge to Edge: Where Does a Vessel Begin?* Investigating where vessels start and end

Yuval:

Adi Hi, how are you? Let's start by you telling me a little about yourself, where and when did you study, what have you done since then?

Adi:

I studied at the Metalwork department in Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem and graduated in 2004. I specialised in metal raising technique for about a year, working in the studio of Carol Hirtenstein who taught me at Bezalel, he was 89 when he retired! I had an exhibition in Old Jaffa, *Body Autobiography*, and in 2007 I started a masters degree at the Cass, in London. I graduated in 2009, thinking I would stay only one more year, but lots of interesting opportunities came my way, and same for my partner who started working for a

leading London based graphic designer. We decided to stay and since then been living and working in London. I'm exhibiting locally and internationally and teach at the Cass as well as a visiting lecturer at Bezalel.



Adi Toch, Melding Pourers 2016. Photo: Nicola Tree

Yuval:

And why did you decide to do a master degree in London? Why the Cass?

Adi:

I had a great experience during an exchange programme at the Cass some years before, where I met Simone ten Hompel, an inspirational tutor. The master programme really suited me - a degree by project, two-year programme. It was very flexible and open. I was studying alongside working as a personal assistant for an economics professor, I was very focused on my project and time passed very quickly. By the second year I completely fell in love with London; The anonymity and diversity.

Yuval:

What was the project?

Adi:

The title was *Encircling space: the embodied experience of vessels* – a

theoretical and practical research of our relationship with objects, especially vessels, cultural and historical background as well as materials and tactility, and the metaphor of the body as a vessel. I tried to create an experience of containment through a series of objects that contain different substances, triggering the senses by sounds and motion.

Yuval:

What attracts you particularly to vessels? The exhibition you are co-curating in London also engages with containers, and probably in between it continues to engage you

Adi:

Vessels are a way of communication for me, as well as surrounding us in daily life our perception is shaped by the division of inside and outside. We leave one framed space and go into another: out of bed, out of the house, into a car... Primal play includes taking things outside boxes and putting them back inside containers, fitting shapes into negative spaces. It is very basic.

Yuval:

What can you tell us about the current exhibition you curate?





Adi and Tamar, 2016

Adi:

I met Tamar de Vries Winter (enameller and metalsmith) seven years ago in London and since then more or less we wanted to do something together. We were both born in Jerusalem a generation apart, we share longing to the same place so we talked about changing landscape and politics but mainly about the meeting of two materials: metal and glass. This triggered a lot of interest and curiosity alongside questioning and testing of boundaries. When we referred to the vessel as a body I asked Tamar if enamel is like skin? This displeased her a little as she naturally feels that enamel is the flesh and bones. Tamar's perception of metal was interesting, for her, its essence is to hold the enamel. "Make me something to land on" she asked.

In terms of approach Tamar's work is narrative, she uses prints in her work whereas I communicate through form. I wanted to create a vessel, held together with enamel. One of the first experiments was a large enamel fracture 'repair': it worked in the test piece but collapsed in the final object as Tamar warned me... I later made a bowl with similar idea but structured more appropriately for enamel. We continued exchanging parts and ideas, I gave Tamar edges of the containers, slices of vessels, and she transformed them with enamel. Tamar did some raising and I have done some enamelling. We talked a lot about colors and longing for blue and yellow with faded tones as in our home country.

Yuval:

Do you think one can see this conversation, and the longing, through your work?

Adi:

Tamar uses prints of Jerusalem but it is only implied as they are often cut. My work has a morphological connection to ancient pottery as well as my preoccupation with oil vessels. Most of the collaboration results are more abstract than what we usually create – an edge, a sliver of a vessel, bottom of a bowl – all of these attempt to question where to begin and end.



Tamar De Vries Winter, Keep Safe Boxes, 2015

Yuval:

And how did the decision to have an exhibition come about? How did you choose the other participants? What did you ask them?

Adi:

We were asked to curate an exhibition for Studio Fusion Gallery, a jewellery space specialising in enamel as well as contemporary jewellery. The gallery is run by a collective of seven women, amongst them Tamar. They wanted to show for the first time, an exhibition focusing on vessels. We invited eight artists: three metalsmiths, one jeweler / architect, two enamel-smiths, a ceramicist and an artist who creates felt vessels. All live and work in the UK.

Simone ten Hompel, which I mentioned earlier, was born in Germany and is one of the most prominent metal artists and educators in the UK. She was doing a workshop last year in Israel at Shenkar and Bezalel. David Clarke, who challenges the traditional discipline's boundaries by creating pieces from old silver, often attacking the surface of the metal with salt and lead. Ane Christensen who was born in Denmark and now living in London creates sculptural bowls and wall pieces, exploring optical illusions, light and shadow. Mara Irsara is an Italian jeweler and architect living in London, working with primal forms and contrast of colors, for the first time making objects especially for the exhibition! She is the niece of the artist duo Gilbert and George. Elizabeth and Jessica Turrell, mother and daughter smiths-enamellers, each of them well recognised for their innovative approach to enamel. Jessica's tactile jewellery / small

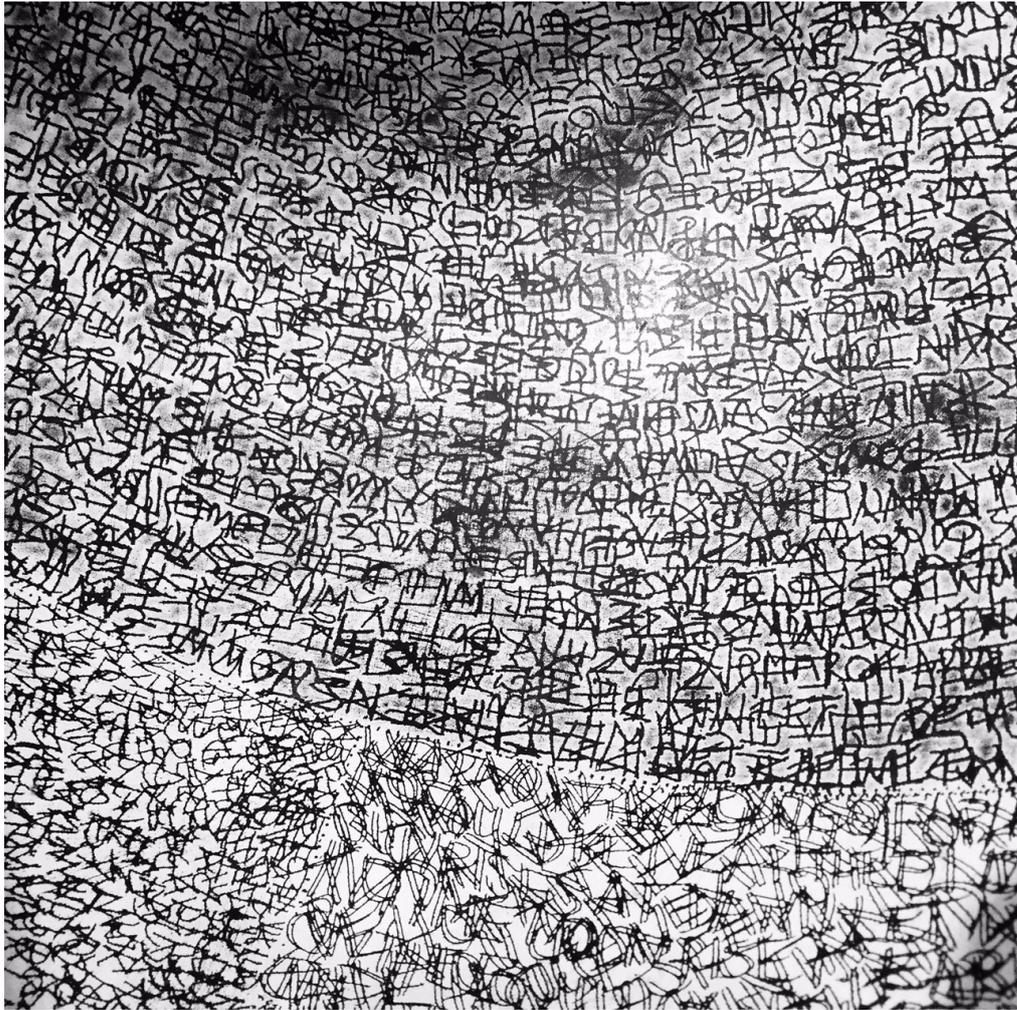
vessels to wear have an intriguing appearance and texture, sometimes feel like pebbles, and Elizabeth uses text which is hand scribed on enamel. Finally two artists from Cambridge, where Tamar lives, Elspeth Owen a ceramicist and Vicki Smith who was trained as an architect and created felt vessels for the exhibition.



Simone ten Hompel, spoons, 2015



Ane Christensen, Ghost Bowl, 2016



Elizabeth Turrell, Close-Up of enameled bowl, 2016

Yuval:

You ask where begins and where ends, and I wonder if part of the answer to this question may be related to functionality? Does a vessel have to poses the ability to physically contain? Or can its content be conceptual?

Adi:

Function is a relevant subject, which runs throughout the exhibition whether through the potential of practical use or through exploration of form. I don't think it is necessary to stick flowers in any object that resembles a vase - a vessel can contain a story or a memory; it is a way of communication just like a painting and has the right to exist without a practical function. Purpose is a good word - reasoning or intention, which is not essentially tied with use. But on the other hand if something looks like it should pour for example, there is a desire or curiosity to pour from it and sometimes an idea is only complete through an action. It is beautiful to see how objects fit into our daily life, how we appropriate them - this modesty sometimes contrasts the

material value when working with precious metals.

Yuval:

So what do you think one can understand or learn from the exhibition you curated?

Adi:

The exhibition shows different approaches to the concept of the containment. Some artists refer to daily rituals, most of the vessels are less functional and explore the notion of containment rather than being practical. Framing space through shadows, installation of spoons, work that examines the physical and conceptual boundaries of the vessels and the use of different materials. There are no conclusions really, as the title suggests there is a question mark and several interpretations. We decided to have an open display (not in showcases mostly) with the caption 'please ask to touch' - we want to offer an accessible experience, encouraging people to handle the works. And now we are organising a pop-up event and conversation between the artists as part of London Craft Week, moderated by design critic, curator and journalist Corinne Julius. We will focus on the process, showing sketches and models as well as raising issues relevant to the theme such as function.

Yuval:

I would love to come

Adi:

Why don't you join us? Thursday 5th of May, and there are plenty of events in London this week

Yuval:

I wish I could...