

Clare Goodwin - Flash

In the spring of 2022, I discovered Tony Wuethrich's exquisite private collection of vases, mainly objects from German, French and Italian production from the 1950-1970s. Tony's passion for vintage ceramics is expressed in the incredible diversity of his collection, which is housed in his private rooms right next to his gallery in Basel. His interest in vases matches my fascination with the aesthetics of domestic objects and interiors of those decades. The period after the middle of the 20th century with the formal elements of the outgoing modernism is a central source of inspiration for my canvas paintings and my painted ceramic objects.

After our first meeting and after we realized that we were both drawn to vintage ceramics, a dialogue began between Tony and me that continued for several months. I was honoured that Tony gave me some of his beautiful vases to use in my studio as models and inspiration for my own work, as it were. The opportunity I had to explore the visual richness of this exquisite private collection of vases is the starting point for most of my newly created works in the Flash exhibition at the Tony Wüthrich Gallery.

Stripped of their original practical function as vessels for flowers, Tony's vases are boldly grouped on the long shelves of his living room. Grouped by size, colour, designer or pattern, these intriguing vessels stand proud and still in their respective idiosyncrasies - each seemingly telling of its former life and the stories of its former owners. As visual gems of fired clay, their individual designs and modernist abstract beauty represent artisanal design sensibility and sensuality. It is precisely these imagined social and human desires of their former owners and their social connotations that have always captivated me as an artist. As a collector of old interior design publications, I can vividly imagine the interiors they once graced. But allusions to Giorgio Morandi's vase still lifes and Picasso's seminal ceramics also resonate in the formal language and grouping of the vases.

I responded directly to the material qualities, design patterns and colours of the vase collection in the artistic exploration that followed. I was interested in the visual language contained in their shapes and colours, which I related to my own visual strategies of constructivism and modernism, as well as my nostalgic love of British ceramics. Although my works speak a minimal, reduced and often geometric language, they are never purely abstract or formally conceived. I often tend to allude to interiors, or 'stillscapes' as I call the joining of domestic objects in a composed spatial environment. Imagined narratives, social and political contexts, the rewriting of human existences through abstract elements drive my work and result in a sense of 'Constructive Nostalgia' for me.

A fascination with angular compositions, formal precision, and arrangements of geometric elements such as rectangles, lines, circles, diamonds, and squares are central to my work. The new series of wall-based ceramics titled Ceramic Block is part of an ongoing series of works in fired clay that I have been developing since 2018 as an extension of my painting practice. Taking cues from small abstract paintings, these ceramics demonstrate my growing sculptural interest in object and relief that reach out into real space. I continue to explore, strictly through the medium of painting, the material of clay, which is strongly associated with craft, applied art and the functionalities of everyday life.

I transferred my work on a constructivist yet narrative painting to the medium of clay in the current exhibition, enriched by the imagined stories of Tony's vase personalities. In between, inspired by the newly discovered elements of form, I returned to my original medium by transferring the impressions I gained into the language of canvas painting.

Clare Goodwin, 2023