



Ceramicist Tessa Eastman—here with four of her creations—is showing works at Vigorous Form. Juliet Sheath

the report

Inside London's Newest Contemporary Ceramics Show

"Vigorous Form" celebrates today's most ebullient, eye-catching ceramics

By Carly Olson

Photography by Courtesy Courtenay Moon

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A new contemporary ceramics show has opened across the pond—and its items are no ordinary mugs and bowls. Courtenay Moon, a recent graduate of Sotheby's Institute of Art and an independent curator, assembled "[Vigorous Form](#)", which celebrates the vibrant movement of fine, abstract ceramics. On display until November 24 at [The Gallery, Unit 9, Huntingdon Estate](#), the show features a blend of European and American ceramicists: David Hicks, Linda Lopez, Tessa Eastman, Andrew Casto, Shannon Goff, and Alex Simpson. Tessa Eastman's "cloud bundles"—colorful, porous bodies topped with playful, high-gloss swirls—are all making their debut at "Vigorous Form." Even a few days before the show's opening, Eastman was still putting the final touches on a purple cloud. "One is actually coming out of the kiln right now," Moon says with a laugh.



Grass Moon (2017) by Shannon Goff is on display at Vigorous Form.

The show's title was born after Moon read an essay by Rose Slivka, the noted art writer and critic, titled "The New Ceramic Presence," which comments on the increase of abstract clay works in the U.S. in the mid-20th century. Though written in 1961, Moon found inspiration in the paper's thesis: "To attempt some insight into what is happening—for it is a happening, peculiar to our time and to American art as a whole – to probe the complex sources of our ceramics and its *vigorous new forms*," Slivka writes. In hindsight, this moment was hardly "peculiar" to the era Slivka wrote about—an attention to handmade ceramics is continuing to this day. "I feel that 'Vigorous Form' reflects the pieces in the show," Moon says, "'Exuberant, bold, and irreverent,' as Slivka would call them."

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Moon credits technology for our vibrant moment in craft ceramics. "We spend our whole lives with a mechanical solution to every one of our problems, that I think people are yearning for the handmade!" she says. Using a traditional white-box gallery space, "Vigorous Form" makes a splash—four works hang on walls while the rest balance on pedestals, dispersing colors and textures throughout the space. And the pieces are meant to be viewed as artworks, elevated for admiration. As Moon says, "Ceramics have fought their way back into the contemporary art world, and it's about time."

Check out some highlights below.



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Assemblage 133 (2017) by Andrew Casto.