

Vessels at the Vanner Gallery

Curated by Jacqueline Creswell



The polysemic nature of vessels highlights the versatility and richness of the term. The numerous meanings of the word and potential interpretations provide a rich medium for creative expression, symbolism, and the exploration of various concepts related to containment, transportation, embodiment and transformation.

The contemporary interpretations in this exhibition serve to honour the vessel's historical place in our lives, whilst also challenging our understanding and meaning of this multifaceted term. The fifteen skilled and accomplished artists exhibiting in **Vessels** at the Vanner Gallery respond and represent a myriad of interpretations and associations expressed through making, creating a narrative resulting in a most stimulating exhibition.

As an object embedded in human experience, the vessel is profound in its quotidian nature. **Vessels** is about so much more than containers created to hold or transport substances. Lucy Glendinning responds using the human form as a vessel for emotions, ideas and consciousness. Lucy incorporates feathers to remind us of our symbiotic relationship with the natural world. The delicate vessels of Frances Carlile and Robyn Neild represent journeys. Ferrying souls from shore to shore, these boats speak of a quest or transformational experience. Rebecca Newnham and Louise Tunnard focus on nature and the vessel-systems that transport nutrients from the root through the plant and pod that holds a seed. Felice Hodges and Laurence Wallace offer diverse interpretations of the theme in painting by using colour and texture. Through the use of varied materials they create a profound sensory experience for the viewer.

These artists often navigate the tension between creating a vessel that is functional and one that carries conceptual or symbolic meaning. They may challenge traditional notions of functionality, blurring the line between art and utility, or use the vessel as a canvas to explore deeper themes and ideas.

Caroline Winn's vessels navigate the tension between creating a vessel that is functional and one that carries a conceptual or symbolic narrative. In her new work created for this exhibition, Jane Sheppard embraces figuration while retaining the essence of a vessel as a container of the spirit. For Kate Windibank, Jo Taylor, Sarah Purvey and Joshua Aubrook, the vessel has its own specific purpose and function, but they all share the common characteristic of being containers. They consider the overall form and shape of the vessel, exploring different proportions, curves, and dimensions. They also experiment with traditional vessel shapes and traverse the boundaries to create unique and unconventional forms. Various techniques are employed, such as glazing, carving, painting, or applying textures to create patterns, designs or narratives on the vessel's surface.

The use of different materials offers unique qualities and characteristics that have allowed the artists to express their ideas and emotions effectively. Their choice of materials has enhanced the artists' ability to communicate their intended message and create an engaging visual experience for the viewer. Lizzie Farey's ethereal works are created from wild flowers, willow wisps and wild grasses and convey messages about our fragility, sustainability and the environment. Robert George's love of trees and his arboreal experience afford him the opportunity to harvest his own timber. His immense knowledge of wood allows him to explore and experiment. Robert is always pushing the boundaries of how he interprets the vessel form.

The different techniques and materials used by these artists are of the utmost importance to the overall expression, visual appeal, symbolism and innovation of their works of art. This group of artists was carefully selected from different disciplines to enhance the creative vision and effectively communicate their interpretation of a vessel. From intricately designed vases and decorative bowls to sculptural containers, the human form, photography and painting these vessels combine to showcase the creativity and skill of the artists, adding beauty and artistic value to our human experience.

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