



Karl Monies, *CXXVI* (2019). Photo: Robert Damisch // Frederik Næblerød, *Lady gloves* (2020). Photo: Alice Folker Gallery // Klara Lilja, *Dryope* (2018). Photo: Klara Lilja

COOL CLAY

Ceramic Containers in Art Today

Lisbeth Bank (b.1975), Claus Carstensen (b.1957), Cathrine Raben Davidsen (b. 1972), Rose Eken (b.1976), Nour Fog (b.1981), Ida Kvetny (b.1980), Klara Lilja (b.1989), Carl Mannov (b.1990), Karl Monies (b.1984), Mie Mørkeberg (b.1980), Ursula Nistrup (b.1974), Fie Norsker (b.1974), Frederik Nystrup-Larsen (b.1992), Frederik Næblerød (b.1988), Knud Odde (b.1955), Anna Samsøe (b.1987), Andreas Schulenburg (b.1975), Anna Stahn (b.1994), Dan Stockholm (b.1982), Anna Sørensen (b.1968)

AUGUST 28th 2020 – JANUARY 10th 2021

Exhibition opening AUGUST 27th 2020 kl. 17:00-19:30

Wet clay, the mineral scent of earth, a cold surface against the soft skin of hands, a cracked surface the eyes can drown in. Clay in art is more popular than ever, and Gammel Holtegaard Art Centre's exhibition *COOL CLAY – Ceramic Containers in Art Today* presents 20 Danish artists' reinterpretation of clay pots as works of art. Here the clay container exists as applied art, myth, body, sound instrument, canvas, and sculpture.

The relationship between humans and nature is increasingly in focus. We see climate change transforming the world around us, and species of flora and fauna suddenly disappearing. We are slowly realising that humankind is the cause of these developments. Even though we might see ourselves as highly developed creatures who have created digital worlds, invented artificial intelligence, and travelled to outer space, we are still part of the earth's ecosystem. We are, in other words, not *beyond* nature but an integral part of its complex global cycle.

It is perhaps in this light that we can see the current interest in ceramics among contemporary artists. Taking soft clay directly from the earth then transforming it into countless creations is one of the most striking trends on the Danish and international art scene today.

People have been creating clay containers for millennia, and the cultural history, myths and symbolism of such vessels provide a clear frame of reference for the works in *COOL CLAY*. Sources of inspiration include the American science-fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin's manifesto-like essay on the receptacle '*The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*' (1986). In the text Le Guin offers a new perspective on the early behaviour of humankind in hunter-gatherer societies, turning her attention to the gatherer's receptacle for carrying and storing food like nuts and berries. Because imagine if it the container had been seen as humankind's first and most important tool instead of the spear?

Le Guin sees the container as a metaphor for sustainable creativity. This connection between the receptacle and creativity is repeated in much of the symbolism connected with clay vessels throughout cultures worldwide, including as symbols of motherhood, fertility, and the cosmos.

Floors Covered with Tons of Earth

Sensuousness is the main focus of Gammel Holtegaard's exhibition *COOL CLAY*. When visitors enter the old baroque villa, they step into an earth-filled, intense landscape with heavy textiles on the walls. Tons of earth from the courtyard of the main building have been dug up to create a base to display the artworks and a path through the exhibition for visitors. The staging of the exhibition arouses the senses - touch, sight, smell and hearing intensify the experience of the many works filling the galleries. Before entering the exhibition visitors are encouraged to remove their shoes and don soft slippers so they can feel the ground beneath their feet as they move through the earth-filled space. Four of the artists - Cathrine Raben Davidsen (b. 1972), Frederik Næblerød (b.1988), Anna Samsøe (b.1987), and Nour Fog (b.1981) - have created works specifically for *COOL CLAY*, works that offer visitors the unique opportunity to explore with their eyes but also their hands.

The staging of *COOL CLAY* continues Gammel Holtegaard's series experimenting with the scope and potential of exhibition design to enhance the art experience.

Exhibition Catalogue

In connection with the exhibition Gammel Holtegaard is publishing an extensive, richly illustrated catalogue in Danish and English. The publication includes texts by Gammel Holtegaard's director Maria Gadegaard, author and art historian Ida Marie Hede, classical archaeologist Rune Frederiksen, and curator Charlotte Sprogøe. It also includes a reprint of the American author Ursula K. Le Guin's essay '*The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*' (1986). The catalogue is designed by Spine Studio and will be published in October.

Getting to Grips with Clay

Encouraging visitors to get to grips with clay is a recurrent theme of the events and courses Gammel Holtegaard is hosting in connection with the exhibition *COOL CLAY*. In a newly built creative workshop in the exhibition itself, children and adults alike are invited to work with the material during opening hours, and throughout the run of the exhibition there will be courses and workshops for the whole family. The events programme includes talks by people like Rune Frederiksen, classical archaeologist and Head of Collections and Research at the Glyptotek, and artist Karen Harsbo, Associate Professor at the Laboratory for Ceramics of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. You can also participate in our short guided Art & Cider tours and Art Walks. The full programme will be published on Gammel Holtegaard's website prior to the exhibition opening

Exhibition Dates and Opening

Everyone is invited to the opening of the exhibition on Thursday August 27th, 2020 from 17.00-19.30. The duo Philip I Schneider will present the performance work *SOIL - WATER – SUN* twice with six choristers. There will be seats for all our guests.

The exhibition runs from Friday August 28th to Sunday January 10th, 2021.

Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday 12.00-17.00, Thursdays 12.00-20.00. Closed on Mondays.

***N.B.** Gammel Holtegaard operates in accordance with the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Danish authorities. Our website is kept constantly up-to-date, so please check for any changes before coming to visit us.*

Press contact

For more information about the exhibition, previews or artist interviews please contact:

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Press materials can be downloaded [here](#).

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