

ALMINE RECH GALLERY

By Fire, Ceramic Works

October 31 — December 15, 2018

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present *By Fire, Ceramic Works*.

Through the juxtaposition of works by Modernist masters and a diverse set of contemporary artists, *By Fire, Ceramic Works* explores the oppositional forces central to the materiality and history of ceramics. Works by Justin Adian, Miquel Barceló, Jean-Baptiste Bernadet, Amy Bessone, Johan Creten, Lucio Fontana, Günther Förg, Mark Hagen, Wifredo Lam, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, Joan Miró, Ron Nagle, Mai-Thu Perret, Pablo Picasso, Anselm Reyle, Julian Schnabel, Arlene Shechet, Claire Tabouret & Pierre Yovanovitch, Rosemarie Trockel, and Betty Woodman will be on view from October 31 to December 15, 2018.

As one of the oldest artistic traditions, ceramics is imbued with a sense of mysticism tied to the unpredictable nature of the firing process. The artist cedes a certain level of authorship to the transformative power of fire, which solidifies the substance, color, and utility of the work in the darkness of a closed kiln. Despite the alchemical implications of the medium, ceramics have traditionally been defined by their functional and domestic uses, divorced from the aura surrounding 'higher' art forms such as painting and sculpture.

In the 20th century, many distinguished artists such as Miró, Fontana, Lam, and Picasso incorporated ceramics into their larger practices. Enamoured with clay's dual capacity for figuration and abstraction, ornament and utility, these artists framed the medium as an extension of modern art. Nonetheless, in relation to painting and sculpture, this body of work has often been viewed as a subordinate rather than parallel pursuit.

In the wake of postmodernism, which saw the destruction of traditional hierarchies of taste, a new school of contemporary ceramicists emerged. Artists such as Creten, Nagle, and Woodman position ceramics as an intermediary between painting and sculpture, celebrating the fluidity of their chosen materials. Others, like Bessone and Trockel, create forms in an unexpected medium, reflective of the temperamental character of the firing process.

By placing modern and postmodern ceramics in context with one another, the exhibition highlights the dialectical nature of the medium.

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