



Contained | Contenu

From Friday, 20 April to Sunday, 7 October 2018

Alison Britton – Anne Marie Laureys – Deirdre McLoughlin – Richard Meitner – Marit Tingleff – Andrea Walsh – Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert

At the request of the Musée Ariana, Monique Deul, founder of the Genevan gallery Taste Contemporary, has brought together seven contemporary artists who continue the dialogue between container and contained, going beyond the utilitarian function of objects to address more conceptual concerns.

The word "contained" implies something held within certain limits, enclosed inside a volume or space, while the notion of content also suggests something signified or revealed, a deep, latent meaning.

While the ceramist constructs around a void, the glassblower creates this void. Poised between tension and equilibrium, vessels push back the limits of the constrained and controlled material; they envelop an inner, physical or metaphorical space.

Alison Britton's pots are completed with runs of slip and glazes, while Marit Tingleff's large-scale ceramic plates feature abstract landscapes. A tangible presence emanates from Deirdre McLoughlin's stoneware sculptures, coil-built and then finely polished. They dialogue with the vessels of thrown clay, then remoulded and assembled, by Anne Marie Laureys. Richard Meitner's fiberglass creations play with this material, making it at times resemble metal or *terrazzo*. Also shaped in glass, Andrea Walsh's precious boxes incorporate porcelain elements, while the blown glass forms of Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert are inspired by the African pottery of his childhood.

Each bearing the imprint of their maker's unique expressive language, these works oscillate between materiality and emotion; they invite contemplation.

Exhibition Curators

Monique Deul, director, Taste Contemporary
Ana Quintero Pérez, research assistant, Musée Ariana

Interview with Monique Deul, Founder and Director of Taste Contemporary

Geneva, Thursday, 8 March 2018

Ana Quintero Pérez (A.Q.P.): Your first passion was classical music, and in London you worked for a long time as a festival organiser. How did you move into the field of applied arts?

Monique Deul (M. D.): Yes, after my law studies, my first passion was indeed classical music. I'd been living in London for fifteen years when I temporarily halted my activities on the birth of my third child. It was in the late 1990s that I came across some very surprising applied art works at the Flow Gallery in Notting Hill, and it was love at first sight. So I started collecting. On a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum, I was astonished to find a piece similar to one I had bought! I was so proud. I carried on visiting exhibitions and went back regularly to the Flow Gallery. One day, its director, Yvonna Demczynska, said to me "Monique, you have a very good eye". She encouraged me to get started and offered me the chance to organise my first exhibition in her space. I had no experience, of course, in the field, so I began with what I knew: being Dutch, I chose to focus on artists from my country. In the end, it was Yvonna – who had by then become a friend – who put on the exhibition with the artists using the data I'd collected, because we moved to Geneva in 2008. But it did allow an idea to take root in my mind...

A.Q.P.: Did your move to Geneva give an international dimension to the artists you represent?

M.D.: Soon after I arrived in Switzerland, I worked for the Verbier festival for two years. But in 2011, I thought, "I'm going to do it; I'm going to launch that project". I already had a very targeted vision. I followed everything that was happening in England but I wanted, for my part, to situate the applied arts in a contemporary art environment and I was aiming at art collectors.

A.Q.P.: Was it difficult setting out as a gallery owner?

M.D.: When I launched the gallery, I felt rather insecure, but one day, someone told me that it's better sometimes to have a new outlook and that this freshness could be an asset because it makes a different perspective possible. And so I immersed myself in the world of applied arts and learned a lot. You could say I'm self-taught. And I'm very grateful to everyone who generously shared their experience with me in Geneva.

A.Q.P.: In 2014, your first exhibition in Geneva was held at the contemporary art gallery Blondeau & Cie, which is quite revealing. You don't show design pieces, but unique, non-functional items. You are determined to abolish the distinctions between ceramics or glass and contemporary art. Is the issue of recognition still crucial today?

M.D.: Yes, absolutely. For me they're on an equal footing. The applied arts are all too often seen as the "poor relation". But people are now rediscovering ceramics and many contemporary art gallery owners are starting to show ceramists' work, which is a good thing.

A.Q.P.: Taste Contemporary exhibits at artgenève and at TRESOR in Basel. You were the one, in fact, who first introduced applied art to artgenève in 2015.

M.D.: Yes. Following on from the success of that first exhibition at Blondeau & Cie, I was invited to participate by Thomas Hug [director of artgenève] who gave me a lot of support and took a risk with me... I didn't feel quite ready and asked Marc Blondeau's advice. He said "Monique, do it, it's a great opportunity to show people exactly what you want to do". It was a success and since then certain collectors come back every year.

A.Q.P.: Within the museum, links with collectors are important, just like those with artists or galleries. The relationship between collectors and galleries is obviously different: how would you describe it?

M.D.: Certain collectors from the art world follow me, the ones who are rediscovering ceramics in particular – the most successful area – but glass too. I show pieces by artists whose works are found in museum collections. Recently, a new collector asked for my opinion. I presented the artists and he fell in love with the work of Alison Britton, Anne Marie Laureys and Marit Tingleff and purchased pieces by all of them!

A.Q.P.: What is the state of the art market?

M.D.: It's still possible to find affordable pieces, though prices are starting to rise. It's like photography in the 1970s, which wasn't considered an art at the time. Photographic prints were affordable then, but Sotheby's recently sold one for over a million francs!

A.Q.P.: The container plays a vital role in the history of ceramics. Many contemporary artists distance themselves from this utilitarian dimension. Why did you suggest the theme of "Contained I Contenu" for this exhibition at the Musée Ariana?

M.D.: By definition, applied art has always had a utilitarian function. Among the pieces by the artists in this exhibition, some are functional and others definitely not, like those by Richard Meitner, for example. Alison Britton always starts out with the container, but she uses the outer surface as a canvas on which she paints. Anne Marie Laureys also begins with a thrown container. She combines two vessels and their initial form disappears, but it's still her starting point. It's extraordinary! That's what I wanted to show.

A.Q.P.: For "Contained I Contenu", you've invited seven artists to create new works that will be shown as an exclusive at the Musée Ariana. How did you choose them? Are they particular favourites?

M.D.: Anne Marie Laureys, Alison Britton and Marit Tingleff create very strong pieces, all very different but with a similar narrative. I have pieces by these artists in my personal collection. I'm convinced of their importance. Alison Britton's pieces are found in around 50 museums. Anne Marie Laureys, the youngest in the group, was recently invited by the Jason Jacques Gallery in New York to do a solo exhibition. Deirdre McLoughlin was shortlisted for the prestigious Loewe Craft Prize. I began with these three, but since the Ariana is a ceramics and glass museum, I also invited artists who work with the latter material. In the field of glass, I love the work of Anna Dickinson, Philip Baldwin and Monica Guggisberg, Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert, a young artist, and Andrea Walsh who mixes glass and porcelain. There's also Richard Meitner, an important and very well-known artist, whose pieces have joined the collections of several museums around the world. In short, I have to like the artist's work first and its technical execution too.

A.Q.P.: You like to challenge artists. For example, you encouraged Andrea Walsh, who usually creates very small pieces, to explore making works on a different scale.

M.D.: Yes, her pieces are beautiful. I'm encouraging her to make some larger pieces. For the Musée Ariana, Andrea Walsh is doing something new: creating a small installation by designing sets of pieces rather than individual items. I suggested to Richard Meitner that he should exhibit some hand-blown pieces, though his new approach involves working with fiberglass. I prompted Jeremy Maxwell Wintrebert – who's now creating light installations – to go back to the container, because I like his "Grand-Bassam" pieces inspired by his childhood in Africa, where he saw women carrying pots on their heads. It's a return

to his roots. The container is always the starting point. I don't tell my artists what to do, but I tell them what I think, which may or may not influence them. I believe in them; I think they're good and I encourage them.

A.Q.P.: Partly through partnerships with galleries, the Musée Ariana continues to promote the contemporary creative world, a mission already dear to Gustave Revilliod (1817-1890), patron and founder of the Ariana, who supported the careers of artists of his day. From the outset, did you represent both emerging and internationally-renowned artists?

M.D.: Absolutely. For example, Anne Marie Laureys was not known outside of Belgium and important collectors are now buying her pieces. It's a recognition of her work. My role is to "place" the artists. I advise collectors, especially at art fairs, and sometimes, if they fall in love with the pieces, they buy them.

A.Q.P.: Lastly, how would you describe your relationship with the artists?

M.D.: I've organized several exhibitions since 2014, and now I do so in my gallery as well. I enjoy true collaboration with the artists. I'm committed to them and vice versa. I represent them in Europe, but I don't exclude them from exhibiting in other galleries. However, as their principal gallerist, I work out a career plan with the artists, strategically choosing the galleries in which they should exhibit. It takes a lot of time, effort and money; in return, I demand their commitment. You have to build relationships with artists, museum curators and collectors: I find it really fascinating to work with all these partners.

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