



# Eric James Mellon

## Bordering on ceramic illustration

MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA | JUNE 8 TO OCTOBER 14, 2012

### PRESS RELEASE

*Geneva, June 2012* – Eric James Mellon, born in 1925 in Watford (Hertfordshire, GB), received formal training in painting drawing and engraving in the Central School of Arts and Crafts de Harrow (Hertfordshire, GB). In 1941, while still pursuing his studies, he began to exploit the possibilities of ceramics by producing lead-glazed terracotta pieces. He established his own ceramics studio in 1957 and taught himself the techniques of turning, decorating and firing stoneware. Far removed from trends and fashions, Eric James Mellon has developed an original form of narrative illustration and has striven to combine painting and ceramics in a highly individual universe.

Eric James Mellon (1925-) is a teller of images. Remaining true to certain themes that he has enriched over the years, this artist draws us into his fabulous world where the female figure is sovereign. His studies on paper, after a live model, and his engravings serve as preparatory material for him for the ornamentation of his ceramic recipients. Angels, mythological characters, animals, musicians, trapeze artists and tightrope walkers co-exist naturally. Mermaids, with legs as well as the body of a fish, accompany a galloping horse, sometimes a bicycle. The myth and the dream are then combined with a certain reality, tinged with poetry and humour, depicting lovingly entwined couples and/or beautiful naked women, reclining nonchalantly. Portraits from live models are drawn directly onto the stoneware body. The decoration covers the entire surface of the pieces : front, back, top and bottom and sometimes even the inside.

Mellon is also a past master in producing transparent or tinted ash glazes that play an important role in the beauty of the ornamentation. The dying elms in his garden gave him the idea of developing a glaze from their ashes. He still tirelessly continues his experiments today and creates recipes based on the ashes of trees, shrubs and plants that enhance the beauty of his glazed painting. Each ceramic piece is the result of intense reflection, as shown by numerous sketches, watercolours or engravings. A selection of these works invites visitors to look at the totality of Mellon's oeuvre, from 1952 up to the recent portraits of Carlene and his tame cockerel from 2011, and to appreciate his captivating contribution to contemporary creation.

## **SHORT BIOGRAPHY**

- 1925 Born at Watford, Hertfordshire (30 Nov.)
- 1945-47 Full-time student at Central School of Arts and Crafts  
(wood-engraving, etching, lithography, painting and drawing)
- 1952 Established an artistic community at Hillesden, Buckinghamshire (painting, pottery)  
Part-time teaching at Croydon School of Art
- 1957 Moved to Bognor Regis, West Sussex
- 1958 Founder member of Craft Potters Association of Great Britain
- 1965 Began experiments using ash glazes made from trees
- 1973-1992 Appointed Head of Art at Slindon College
- 1977-1983 Appointed Head of pottery at Havant Sixth Form College
- 2012 Lives and works in Bognor Regis, West Sussex (GB)

Mellon realized more than 30 solo exhibitions; one in 2000 at the Yorkshire Museum in York. He participated in about 60 collective exhibitions, essentially in United Kingdom.

His work appears in several public or private collections in Europe.

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### VISUALS FOR THE PRESS

- 1 Owl**, between 1952 and 1956  
Eric James Mellon  
red earthenware slip coated, decorated  
with cobalt and iron oxides, transparent lead glaze  
oval plate  
length 26.6, width 22.3 cm

collection of the artist  
photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



- 2 Apollo & Daphne**, 1961  
Eric James Mellon  
stoneware decorated with cobalt oxide,  
glaze recipe from the Oxshott pottery (Surrey)  
plate  
diam 22.8 cm

collection of the artist  
photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



**3 Sarah & Mermaid, 2002**

Eric James Mellon

Bowl

stoneware decorated with iron and cobalt oxides,  
Philadelphus ash glaze ; burnt in reduction kiln  
diam 16 cm, height 8.5 cm

private collection

photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



**4 Sarah & Mermaid, 2002**

Eric James Mellon

Bowl (reverse)

stoneware decorated with iron and cobalt oxides,  
Philadelphus ash glaze ; burnt in reduction kiln  
diam 16 cm, height 8.5 cm

private collection

photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



**5 Circus, 2006**

Eric James Mellon

vase (face 1)

stoneware decorated with metallic oxides, Philadelphus ash  
glaze  
height 44 cm

private collection

photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



- 6 Circus, 2006**  
 Eric James Mellon  
 vase (face 2)  
 stoneware decorated with metallic oxides, Philadelphus ash  
 glaze  
 height 44 cm

private collection  
 photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



- 7 Maiden & Mirror, 2001**  
 Eric James Mellon  
 bowl  
 stoneware decorated with metallic oxides, elm ash glaze  
 d 13.5 cm

private collection  
 photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



- 8 Maiden & Mirror, 2001**  
 Eric James Mellon  
 bowl (reverse)  
 stoneware decorated with metallic oxides, elm ash glaze  
 d 13.5 cm

private collection  
 photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



9 **Leanne**, 2011  
Eric James Mellon  
bowl  
stoneware decorated with metallic oxides,  
bean ash glaze  
diam. 22.5 cm

collection of the artist  
photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



10 **Europa and the bull**, 1974  
Eric James Mellon  
plate  
stoneware decorated with iron and cobalt oxides,  
elm ash glaze  
diam. 27.6 cm

collection of the artist  
photo : David Illman, Trevor Ridgers



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### NOTE TO JOURNALISTS

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With our thanks

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### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

#### Musée Ariana

Swiss museum for ceramics and glass  
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[ariana@ville-ge.ch](mailto:ariana@ville-ge.ch)  
[www.ville-geneve.ch/ariana](http://www.ville-geneve.ch/ariana)

Open 10 am - 6 pm  
Closed Mondays

**Exhibition opening** : Thursday June 7, 2012 at 6.30 pm

### EXHIBITION ORGANISATION

#### Curators :

Frank Nievergelt, art historian and collector,  
Isabelle Naef Galuba, director  
assisted by Mathias Godoy

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### PUBLICATIONS ON SALE AT THE MUSEUM DURING THE EXHIBITION

**Eric James Mellon. *The development of glazes 1951-2012***, published by University of Chichester, Chichester à to celebrate the exhibition at the Musée Ariana in 2012 – ISBN 978-1-907852-11-41 – CHF 12.-

**Eric James Mellon. *Pages from my Sketchbooks***, published by University of Chichester, Chichester, 2011 – ISBN 978-1-907852-02-2 – CHF 25.-

**Eric James Mellon. *65 years of printmaking***, published by University of Chichester, Chichester, 2010 – ISBN 078-0-948765-21-6 – CHF 40.-

**Eric James Mellon, Paul Foster. *Decorating Stoneware. Ash Glazes and the Art of the Brush*** – published by University of Chichester, 2007 – ISBN 978-0-948765-07-0 (hard paste) – CHF 48.-

**Eric James Mellon, Paul Foster. *Decorating Stoneware. Ash Glazes and the Art of the Brush*** – published by University of Chichester, 2007 – ISBN 978-0-948765-12-4 (soft paste) – CHF 45.-