

# Christian Holstad

## The Divulcation of Tops and Bottoms

16.05.2023

27.05.2023

As human beings, we tend to look for contrasts. There are many contrasts in the current ceramic work of the artist Christian Holstad. Having worked in various mediums, Christian Holstad's take on pottery is to subvert the rules of ceramic to get what he desires. With a series of vases, a very familiar, even comforting concept takes on a strangeness in shape and in color. He also conceived the idea of making the vases in interchangeable pieces, both for practical reasons (cleaning for example) but to also offer varying possibilities.

A vase is normally an object we think to fulfill one exact purpose, to hold water with flowers. Once that is served, the vase is placed and not touched again until the flowers are to be tossed out. What Christian Holstad has changed, by creating the vase in pieces, is taking it from its static embodiment and making it animated. We are invited to change configurations, stacking pieces on each other, playing with different colors and forms. It is still a vase in the end, it still holds water, flowers can still be held in it.

Contrast comes into view in his choice of decorating the vases. Taking a cue from the artist Fausto Melotti (to the point of faithfully following the artist's glaze recipes) colors and textures link to each other before taking off in their own directions. Soft pinks fade into creams, blacks become dotted, taking on the look of a distant galaxy. All the while what may appear smooth is indented, what looks cratered hasn't the slighted bump.

While he might bend the rules in pottery, Christian Holstad is still respectful. He has taken to the history of ceramics and its origins. He favors the techniques of Faenza pottery found in the Romagna region of Italy. He uses trempage as well as airbrush and stenciling for glazing. Clay can be extruded into forms, something reminiscent from his pasta making workshops. Even his interest in knitting has found itself in unlikely shapes and themes. One vase at first glance seems a total abstraction, only to reveal itself to be a cat "playing" with a butterfly. This soft moment turns dark when one thinks of the nature of a cat.

Still, Christian Holstad hasn't made this object useless or simply sculpture, it is still a vessel to hold flowers. A common object for every day.

This diversity of concepts, themes, techniques and contrasts coming together could be what makes these ceramic works so compelling. Having started out with the idea of just wanting to have garden flowers in the home, Christian Holstad has brought together all his interests, shaping and coloring them into something each of us can use and not think of the same way again.

-Christopher Andrews

### Christian Holstad

Christian Holstad was born in 1972 in Anaheim, California; he lives and works in Brisighella, Italy. Characterized by a general attitude rather than a specific medium or a method, Christian Holstad's work contains ideas related to social classes, culture, sexuality and society. A keen eye both on solemn and everyday concepts constitutes body of work that, encompassing sculpture, installation, performance, photography, collage and textiles, is concerned with the construction and manifestation of social and intimate spaces.

Holstad's practice has investigated domestic and subcultural sites, often exploring and calling into question preconceived notions of identity and desire.

His solo exhibitions include: Consider Yourself as a Guest (Cornucopia), Cà Foscari, Venezia (2019); Christian Holstad, red, yellow, lime, pink, lavender, green, scarlet, lavender, scarlet, green, lavender, The Magazine Sessions 2016, Serpentine Gallery, London (2016); Toothpick, Massimo De Carlo, Milan (2016); The Book of Hours, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2013); The World's Gone Beautiful, Daniel Reich Gallery, New York (2009-10); Christian Holstad. I Confess, Galleria Civica of Modena, Modena (2009); Gaity: Discovering the Lost Art (in Absentia), curated by Beatrix Ruf, Kunsthalle Zürich (2004); Innocent Killers, Project Room, MoMA PS1, New York (2004).

His group shows include: Les Flammes, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Paris (2021); Transitions and Transformations, NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale (2019); SI Onsite, Swiss Institute, New York (2018); Fields of War, Massimo De Carlo, London (2016); Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art, Hangzhou (2013); Paper, Saatchi Gallery, London (2013); Aquatopia, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham (2013); Graphite, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis (2013); The Air We Breathe, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2011); Coming After, The Power Plant, Toronto (2011); Compilation IV, Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf (2009); Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009); Unmonumental (Inaugural

Exhibition), New Museum, New York (2007); Uncertain States of America, Serpentine Gallery, London (2006); Collettiva, Massimo De Carlo, Milano (2003).

He has also participated to the Biennale de Lyon in Lyon in 2007 and to the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum in New York in 2004.

### Christopher Andrews

Christopher Andrews was born in 1971 in Dallas, Texas.

Lives and works between Paris and the Belgian countryside. Christopher Andrews is an artist working in various mediums and disciplines, from oil painting to clay. His concepts are based on the history of art and the human interest and understanding of it. Christopher Andrews is also a contributing writer for the French publication Encens.