

York Art Gallery



TWO
TEMPLE
PLACE

Body Vessel Clay

Black Women, Ceramics & Contemporary Art

24 June – 18 September



Photograph of Ladi Kwali taken by W. A. Ismay. (c) York Museums Trust.

-for immediate release-

A new exhibition is coming to York Art Gallery for Summer 2022. **Body Vessel Clay: Black Women, Ceramics & Contemporary Art**, curated and conceived by Dr Jareh Das in partnership with Two Temple Place, explores artworks by three generations of Black women artists working with clay. As the home of the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA), York Art Gallery is a perfect venue to celebrate this medium in new and exciting ways.

Clay is one of the oldest forms of making, with indigenous pottery traditions existing in almost every location in the world, marked by technical variations from culture to culture.

Body Vessel Clay spans 70 years of ceramics. In this ground-breaking exhibition, visitors will be able to see works from Nigerian pioneer potter Ladi Kwali and her contemporaries, and international contemporary artists including Bisila Noha, Chinasa Vivian Ezhuga, Dame Magdalene Odundo, Jade Montserrat, Julia Phillips, Phoebe Collings-James and Shawanda Corbett, who all incorporate working with clay as part of their film, performance, painting, and sculpture practice.

In **Body Vessel Clay**, the artists explore race, gender, colonialism, the body, and the vessel, as well as how their work with clay challenges the perceptions of clay as a medium. The aim of this exhibition is to shine new light on under-profiled collections and the contributions made by Black women artists and ceramists at its core through a visually exciting show.

Alongside **Body Vessel Clay** will be the Aesthetica Art Prize, a platform for the world's best artists. The award celebrates contemporary art in all its forms, taking the temperature of creativity today.

Dr Jareh Das said "Body Vessel Clay: Black Women, Ceramics & Contemporary Art celebrates an intergeneration of cross-disciplinary artists working with clay, all of whom upend ways of working with the medium both conceptually and traditionally. The exhibition begins with seminal Nigerian potter Ladi Kwali (1925-1984) tracing the connection between Nigerian pottery and traditions of British studio pottery during the 1950s to 1970s. Importantly, it centres on matrilineal passing down of such traditions, women to women, within communities in Nigeria and extending across the globe."

Dr Helen Walsh, Curator of Ceramics at York Art Gallery, said *"We are delighted to be able to be working with Two Temple Place to present the Body Vessel Clay exhibition at York Art Gallery. The themes it covers shine a light on a little-known strength of CoCA's collection, the work of important Black women potters Ladi Kwali, Dame Magdalene Odundo and a wealth of others. It also allows us to share with our visitors the work of a new generation of artists who are continuing to explore the medium and meaning of clay. We hope that this unique focus offers a different way of looking at the history of ceramics, exploring themes of decolonisation, positioning Black women at the centre of the narrative."*

Anneliese Davidsen, Director of Two Temple Place, said *"We are thrilled to be working with the team at York Art Gallery to bring this important exhibition to a new audience. Our exhibition at Two Temple Place aim to showcase unseen work, forgotten histories, and stories we perhaps choose not to hear, working with early-career curators who can help us unfold and re-evaluate these stories. The works in this show, originally curated for Two Temple Place, do just that, and we can't wait to see visitors explore it in York."*

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For interviews, high resolution images or more information please contact:

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York Art Gallery Opening Times: Wednesday – Sunday 11am-5pm

York Art Gallery's collection of paintings spans more than 600 years and works range from 14th century Italian panels and 17th century Dutch masterpieces to Victorian narrative paintings and 20th century works by LS Lowry and David Hockney. The Gallery also holds the most extensive and representative collection of British Studio Ceramics, thanks to the acquisition of collections from Dean Milner-White, WA Ismay and Henry Rothschild and the recent long-term loan of Anthony Shaw's collection. Highlights are on show in the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA). The Gallery and its collections are cared for by the charity York Museums Trust, established in 2002. For more information visit www.yorkartgallery.org.uk

Two Temple Place

Two Temple Place is a magnificent neo-Gothic mansion in central London, owned and run by charity the Bulldog Trust. *Body Vessel Clay* is the tenth major free annual exhibition produced by the venue and showcasing regional public collections. Since 2011, these exhibitions have invited almost 400,000 people

to see some of the UK's collections' least-known artworks, and the exhibition forms the flagship heart of a programme that will share the hidden gem of Two Temple Place more widely, with more people, for more of the year through cultural and community partnerships. The building inspires, provokes and welcomes creative reimaginings of its spaces, new retellings of its stories, and new artistic responses to its history and craftwork. A summary of the impact of Two Temple Place's exhibitions to date can be seen here: <https://twotempleplace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2TP-Exhibition-Report-2011-20.pdf>

Two Temple Place is grateful to the Bulldog Trust, John Ellerman Foundation and the Art Fund's Reimagine programme for their generous support of this exhibition. www.twotempleplace.org

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