

Many a Slip

invited artists juggle with the domestic symbol of 'the cup'

22 July to 5 September 2015
curated by Alison Britton

A Slip in Time

I lived for eight years in London, and in that time among my happiest experiences involved Marsden Woo Gallery, Alison Britton, and/or tea. I had heard of all three prior to arriving in the UK but had yet to understand the depths of pleasure that each could offer. Today, from my new perch as director of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, I think fondly back to those experiences. The gallery invited me to do a series of discussions with each of their exhibiting artists - modeled on the grad school 'crit' but without the grades, and perhaps an extra modicum of reverence given the quality of the work invariably on view. The session I had with Alison herself was a wondrous hour, in which we relived the high-risk, high-skill method of poured decoration that she had recently mastered.

Alison is a woman of many parts, not only an artist but also a skilled writer (her recent book of essays, *Seeing Things*, is a perfect introduction to the story of British craft over the past thirty years) and curator, who has brought her combination of steely intelligence and subtle sensuality to many exhibition projects. In this case she turns her eagle-like eyes on the cup. Living as I do now in the land of strong black coffee (and the diner mug) the modesty of that form - its relatively small scale, its fragility, the restraint one often sees in its decoration, the relatively mildness of the stimulant it tends to contain - all strike me as emblematically English.

That may just be sentiment on my part. But what is doubtless true is that the cup, as artists from George Ohr to Ken Price have proved, is the perfect way to focus our attention. Precisely because of its simplicity (essentially, a cylinder and an arc conjoined) and its small scale, it serves to condense artistic persona. Britton's idea to commission cups from a wide range of artists, working in various materials, is ingenious. Each is presented on a level playing field with a small but potent token of themselves.

In the discussions I led at Marsden Woo, it was magical to see how the objects could hold the room. The words that the artist, the audience and I shared would flow around the work, like currents round so many river rocks. I wish I could shift time just slightly, so that *Many a Slip* could have happened when I was still in London. It's exactly the sort of thing that I, and a good many others, had in mind.

Glenn Adamson, 2015

Contributors

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
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| Betsy Dadd | Andrew Logan | Silo Studio |
| Robert Dawson | Michael Marriot | Ester Svennson |
| Jane Dillon | Robert Marsden | Janice Tchalenko |
| Ken Eastman | James Maskrey | Peter Ting |
| Zachary Eastwood-Bloom | Nao Matsunaga | Maiko Tsutsumi |
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