

JASON WASON



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SILENT WITNESS



EXHIBITION 6TH SEPTEMBER - 4TH OCTOBER 2014

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**BROKEN PROMISES**  
40 x 47 cm

## An all-seeing eye

When I wrote a previous introduction for Jason Wason's exhibition, 'A Devil's Box of Tricks', (LSG August 2010), I suggested that 'his visual language evolves slowly, with each pot wrought from his disciplined imagination'. For me the key word in this sentence is 'wrought', as there is a real sense that Wason's body of work is drawn and shaped from his encyclopedic knowledge of the ancient pots produced in China, Korea, New Mexico, India and medieval England. Of course being knowledgeable is one thing, knowing how to apply knowledge is something quite different. To fully understand Wason the potter, one has to acknowledge the profound admiration and respect he has for the history and culture of these countries.

He is restless, obsessive and endlessly productive. His energy levels are high, constantly fuelled by the need to resolve his current project. He is psychologically unable to take the easy option or play safe. This need to move on and ask new questions is perfectly conveyed in a statement by Chuck Close, the American photorealist painter and photographer, 'Far more interesting than problem solving is problem creation'. This perceptive observation begins to throw some light on Wason's attitude and creative ambition.

His vessels are immediately recognisable and differ in many ways from those by other contemporary makers. Each vessel, packed with diverse cultural references, requires concentration and interpretation. With a dark, unsettling presence they are the antithesis of the cool, neutral pots designed to blend in with bland contemporary interiors.

The scrubbed and scoured surface of the square dish with chamber, on page 8, with its central multi-layered conical chamber offers a subtle contrast to the underlying geometrical precision of the overall structure. The 'glow' from the central chamber responds to minor modulations in the surrounding lighting conditions. Although consistent with Wason's relentless engagement with different forms of containment, it is also conceptually suggestive of something much grander, such as a utopian cityscape. When he states that his boxes and vessels are 'designed to protect imagined treasures, worldly or spiritual in nature', Wason seems to imply that the mysteries and darkness of containment can be viewed as a metaphor for the

fragility of the inner self. Perhaps further confirmation of this can be found in the 'Lost Soul' pieces, with their unsettling mix of hope and despair. Is this a journey towards redemption or a final hopeless



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journey towards oblivion? This multiplicity of narratives and our desire to engage with these narratives remind us that, as individuals, we are all the product of a complex history.

Each vessel within the 'Templetop' series is permeated with an array of historical traces. Alluding to Buddhist temples in India and Thailand, they seem to demand reverence. The viewer is challenged to take time to respond to an innate serenity. Wason has a remarkable ability to embrace and then re-interpret such a diversity of cultural influences. This alchemy avoids pastiche and somehow brings a new potency and contemporary relevance to our understanding of ceramic history.

The 'Warmongering' series is angry, overtly political and accusatory. Whilst it would be easy to link it to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the work actually began some years ago and is not a direct response to the current violence. There is a real sense of shock when one is confronted by the anger and aggression of the message 'Stop calling dead children collateral damage, you fuckers', scrawled around the rim of a beautifully crafted pot. Surely these pots have a unique place in the remarkable panoply of contemporary ceramics? Wason's explanation of why he chose to make these works is revelatory: 'To me these works are a response to the obscenity of many and diverse nations, including our own, whose inability



STOP CALLING DEAD CHILDREN COLLATERAL DAMAGE YOU FUCKERS  
40 x 56 cm



STOP CALLING DEAD CHILDREN COLLATERAL DAMAGE YOU FUCKERS  
40 x 56 cm

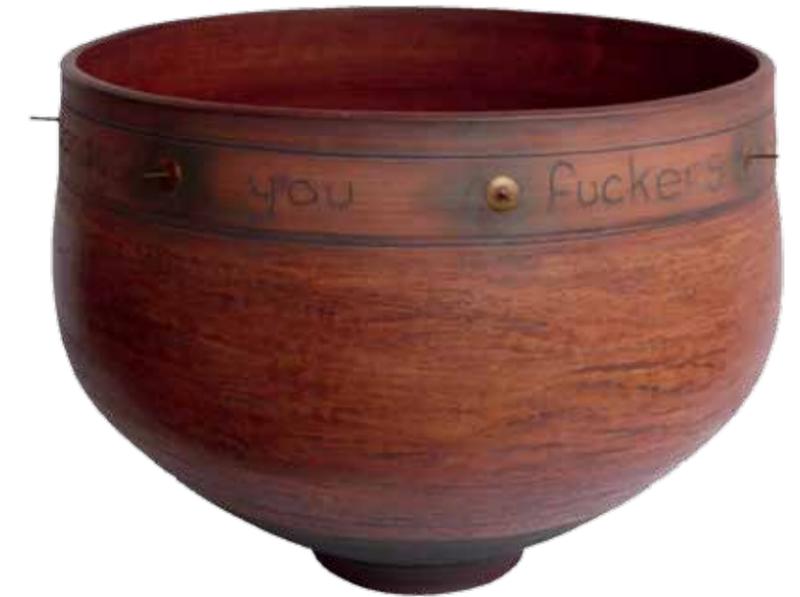
to evolve a structured peace through negotiation will allow them to feel justified in dropping ordinance on strangers, men, women and children, and blowing them limb from limb. Somehow I am also trying to explore a resolution, or at least some sort of positive outlook, to such issues through other works in the show. They are small touchstones to humanity'.

Whilst the overall concept and structure of his vessels are carefully considered, Wason has always been particularly sensitive to the tactile quality of the object's surface. His attitude to glazes is noticeably uncompromising: 'I don't use glazes. I play around with all sorts of materials some of which are used as ingredients in a traditional glaze, but the notion of putting a coat of glass over my clay has never really interested me. The clay itself is the skin of the object, and so I tend it and work with it until it reveals the character that I have in mind for the object in hand.

He is a passionate and critical citizen of the world, with an endless curiosity and respect for the 'other'. His personal integrity ensures that the pursuit of new ideas is based on a deep knowledge of where we have come from and how pots have evolved. For him, the past is not a closed door. His inventive intertwining of the past and present, combined with a subtle blurring of histories, enable him to create vessels that demand a new level of engagement between viewer and object.

Determinedly independent from the art world, Wason has never been one for making future plans. 'I prefer to focus on the here and now. The now, that elusive omnipresent now, is tangible and if I can make a half decent job of dealing with that, then the future seems to take care of itself, which of course turns up right on time'

Looking back on Wason's career one quickly becomes aware that here is someone prepared to play the long game. The early years were challenging, with a lack of recognition and periods of financial hardship. Despite this, his dedication to his craft seems to get stronger year by year. Simplistic talk about his 'maturity' would be to miss the point that, from his perspective, it is always better to travel than to arrive. Wason's pleasure in the twists and turns of his



STOP CALLING DEAD CHILDREN COLLATERAL DAMAGE YOU FUCKERS  
28 x 40 cm

creative journey – from the Leach pottery to the 'warmongering' pots – would suggest that there is much more to come.

His output now attracts serious attention round the world. In addition to collectors who regularly pursue his work, he has been invited to show in an impressive number of international exhibitions.

Of particular note was his inclusion in the 'Contemporary British Ceramics' exhibition at The Mint Museum, North Carolina, USA (2010). The following year he had a one-man show at the Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, Japan. Mashiko is renowned as the town where Shoji Hamada lived and worked. By utilizing some of Wason's earlier work, already in their collection, the Mashiko Museum created a retrospective exhibition showing examples of his work from 1985 to 2013. Also in 2011 Austin Desmond Fine Art, London, held a three-

person show featuring Wason, Janet Leach and Bill Marshall. (Janet and Bill were important mentors to Wason during his early days at the Leach Pottery in St.Ives.) More recently, in 2013, the Pangolin Gallery, London, invited him to show in their major exhibition of large-scale 'Sculptural Ceramics'.

Wason is an outstanding craftsman, driven by passion and strong beliefs. His originality, his skills and his willingness to pursue his own vision have all contributed to the creation of a challenging and engaging artist. The range and quality of work in 'Silent Witness' will undoubtedly make us think, and at times make us uncomfortable.

Professor Alan Livingston  
August 2014



PLAZA  
16 x 50 CM



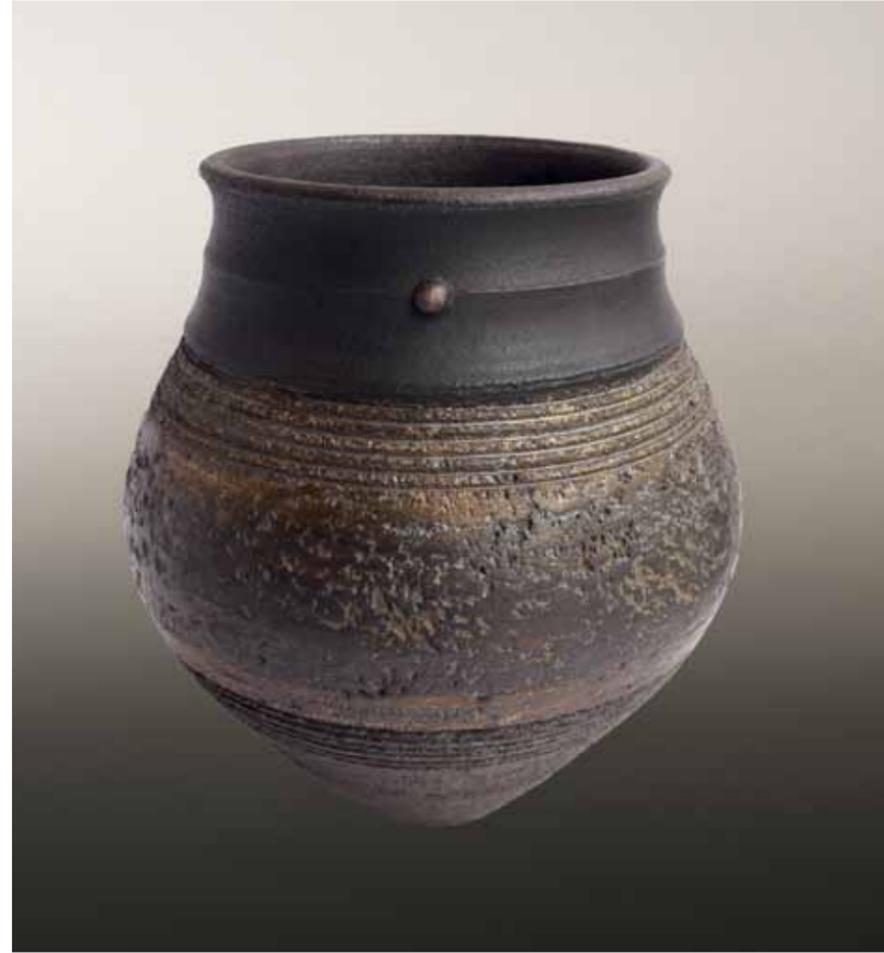
TEMPLE TOP VESSEL  
45 x 52 CM



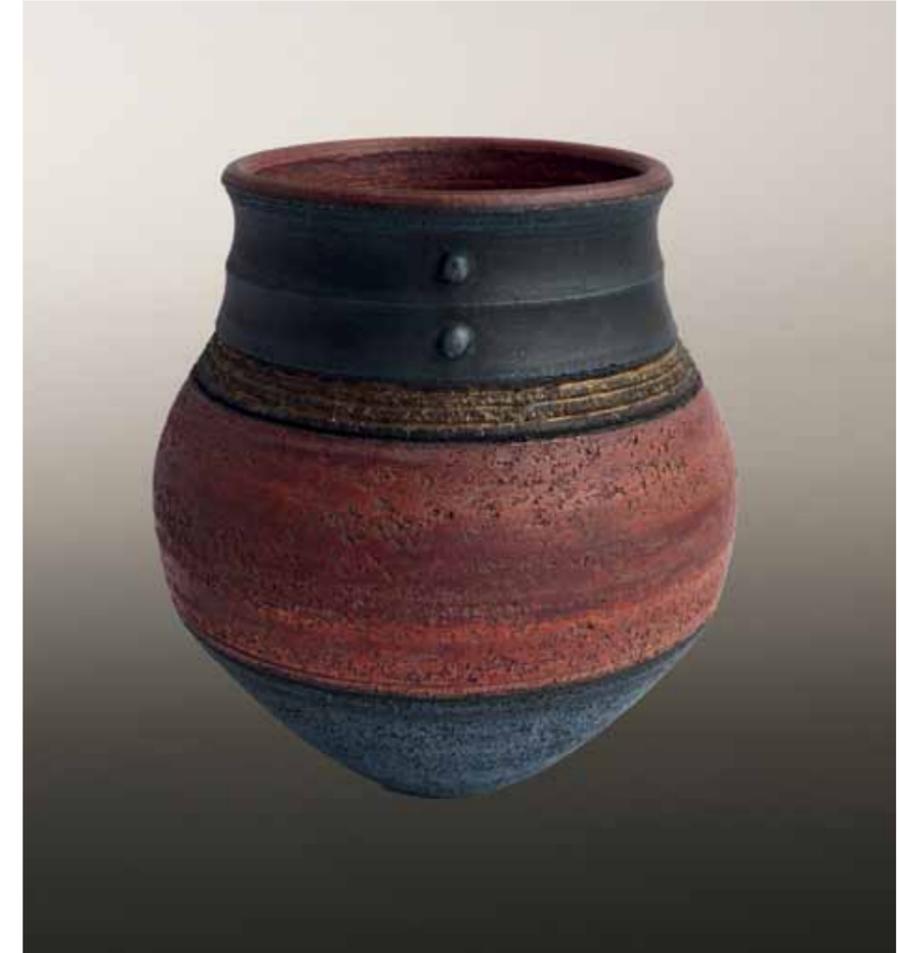
LOST SOUL  
25 x 43 CM

LOW SLUNG VESSEL  
24 x 54 cm





BLACK & GOLD JAR  
20 x 17 CM



RED & GREEN JAR  
16 x 15 CM



RED & GOLD STUDED BOWL  
33 x 54 CM



TEMPLE TOP VESSEL  
62 x 48 CM



SHIELD  
24 x 36 CM



BLACK AND GOLD LIDDED VESSEL  
42 x 54 CM

WHITE VESSEL  
58 x 55 CM





TEXTURED JAR  
16 x 16 CM



MEETING OF MINDS  
25 x 45 CM

LOST SOUL  
20 x 56 CM





PLAZA  
12 x 48 CM



TEMPLE TOP VESSEL  
30 x 44 CM



STUDED BOWL  
13 x 22 CM



RED & GOLD JAR  
19 x 19 CM



AXE HEAD VESSEL  
15 x 13 CM



AXE HEAD VESSEL  
17 x 31 CM

LOW SLUNG VESSEL  
25 x 44 CM





ANCESTOR JAR  
51 x 28 CM

JASON WASON

BORN 1946 LIVERPOOL

- 1964-1974 TRAVELLED EUROPE, NORTH AFRICA, MIDDLE EAST, ASIA.
- 1974-1976 SET UP CRAFTS COMMUNITY IN DUMFRIESHIRE, BUILT A KICK WHEEL FROM THE BACK WHEEL AND HALF SHAFT OF A MORRIS 1000 VAN, AND LEARNT TO THROW.
- 1976-1981 LEACH POTTERY, ST IVES.
- 1981- OWN STUDIO, ST JUST, CORNWALL.

EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 SILENT WITNESS, LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO
- 2014 CRUCIBLE 2 AN EXHIBITION OF SCULPTURE AT GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL, CURATED BY GALLERY PANGOLIN.
- 2014 LONDON ART FAIR, REPRESENTED BY LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO.
- 2013 SCULPTURAL CERAMICS. PANGOLIN GALLERY, LONDON.
- 2012 'ALL FIRED UP', LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO, CORNWALL
- 2012 HIGH CROSS HOUSE, DARTINGTON HALL, TOTNES, DEVON.
- 2011 JANET LEACH, BILL MARSHALL, JASON WASON, AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART LONDON.
- 2010 'A DEVIL'S BOX OF TRICKS', LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO.
- 2010 'BURNT OFFERINGS', PANGOLIN LONDON.
- 2010 'CERAMICS IN THE STUDIO', NEWLYN ART GALLERY.
- 2010 MASHIKO MUSEUM, TOCHIGI PREFECTURE, JAPAN.
- 2008 LONDON ART FAIR (LEMON STREET GALLERY).
- 2008 'GALLERY ST IVES', TOKYO, JAPAN.
- 2008 MUSEUM OF MODERN CERAMIC ART, GIFU PREFECTURE, JAPAN, AND WORK BOUGHT IN FOR THE PERMANENT MUSEUM COLLECTION.
- 2008 LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO.
- 2007 LONDON ART FAIR (LEMON STREET GALLERY).
- 2007 'THE CIRCLE IS UNBROKEN', LEMON STREET GALLERY, TRURO.
- 2007 AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON, MIXED SHOW.
- 2006 AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, BLOOMSBURY SQUARE LONDON, SUMMER SHOW.
- 2006 HARLEQUIN GALLERY, LONDON, MIXED SHOW.
- 2006 SETO CITY ART MUSEUM, JAPAN.
- 2005 KUSAKABE FOLK MUSEUM, GIFU PREFECTURE, JAPAN.
- 2005 MARUZEN DEPARTMENT STORE NAGOYA, JAPAN.
- 2004 'COLLECT', VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON.
- 2004 'JASON WASON CERAMICS', AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.

- 2003 'BODY AND FORM', JOANNA BIRD GALLERY, LONDON.
- 2003 WALKER ART GALLERY, LIVERPOOL.
- 2002 GALLERY BIZEN SETO SHI, AICHI, JAPAN.
- 2002 'CERAMICA INTERNATIONAL', INCLUDING BERNARD LEACH, JANET LEACH, PENLEE MUSEUM, PENZANCE.
- 2002 'POTTERS FROM THE TREASURE HOUSE', JASON WASON, YASUO TERADA, AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 2002 SETO CITY CULTURAL CENTRE, AICHI PREFECTURE, JAPAN, EXHIBITION OF WORK AFTER TWO MONTHS' RESIDENCY.
- 2002 'JAPANESE CONNECTIONS', SETO GLASS AND CERAMIC CENTRE, JAPAN.
- 2001 BRITISH STUDIO CERAMICS, CLAY STUDIO PHILADELPHIA, USA.
- 2001 'SOFA EXPO', SCULPTURAL OBJECTS AND FUNCTIONAL ART, CHICAGO.
- 2000 SIX CHAPEL ROW, BATH.
- 2000 WORKED FOR TWO MONTHS WITH YASUO TERADA AT SETO, AND FIRING ANAGAMA KILN AT SEIHOJI ANCIENT KILN PARK, AICHI.
- 2000 'JAPANESE CONNECTIONS', C SQUARE GALLERY, NAGOYA JAPAN.
- 2000 'JASON WASON, DAVID LEACH, SHINSAKA HAMADA, TATSUZO SHIMAOKA', DARTINGTON HALL, DEVON.
- 1999 AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 1999 COBRA AND BELLAMY, CHELSEA, LONDON.
- 1998 RUNNING RIDGE GALLERY, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO, USA.
- 1998 AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 1997 SIX CHAPEL ROW, BATH.
- 1997 JOANNA BIRD GALLERY, INCLUDING LEACH, HAMADA, CARDEW, RIE.
- 1996 'PLAYING WITH FIRE', AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 1995 'TEN PIECES', TATE GALLERY, ST IVES.
- 1995 'JAPANESE CONNECTIONS', TOURING SHOW.
- 1995 'TEXTILES AND CERAMICS', RUFFORD ART CENTRE, NOTTINGHAM.
- 1995 CORNISH CRAFTS ASSOCIATION, TRURO MUSEUM.
- 1995 GALLERY GILBERT, DORCHESTER.
- 1995 GALLERIE INART, AMSTERDAM.
- 1995 BOYMANS VAN BEUNINGEN MUSEUM, ROTTERDAM
- 1995 VINCENT GALLERY, EXETER.
- 1994 RAKU EXHIBITION, TATE GALLERY ST IVES.
- 1994 ANDREW USISKEN GALLERY, LONDON.
- 1993 'EXCAVATION SERIES', AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 1992 MARUZEN DEPARTMENT STORE, TOKYO, JAPAN.
- 1990 AUSTIN DESMOND FINE ART, LONDON.
- 1990 NATIONAL MUSEUM AND GALLERY, LIVERPOOL.

APPOINTMENTS

- 2005 APPOINTED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE FOR SEIHOJI ANCIENT KILN PARK, AICHI, JAPAN.
- 2005 INTERNATIONAL ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, FOR SETO CITY, AICHI, JAPAN.
- 2002 APPOINTED PROJECT OFFICER FOR CERAMICA INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CERAMICS, RUN BY TATE GALLERY, NEWLYN ORION GALLERY, TRURO MUSEUM. INTERNATIONAL ARTIST IN RESIDENCE, FOR SETO CITY, AICHI, JAPAN.
- 2001 APPOINTED PROJECT OFFICER, JAPAN 2001, TO INVITE YASUO TERADA TO UK AND TOGETHER TO BUILD A RAKU KILN AT LEACH POTTERY ST IVES.

AWARDS

- 2005 SOUTHWEST ARTS COUNCIL, GRANT TO WORK AT EXPO
- 2005 AT SEIHOJI KILN PARK, SETO JAPAN.
- 1998 SOUTHWEST ARTS COUNCIL, GRANT TO WORK AND STUDY, NEW MEXICO, USA.
- 1997 LECTURE TOUR OF ISRAEL, FUNDED BY BRITISH COUNCIL.
- 1992 INSTALLATION AT BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, DHAKAR, BANGLADESH.
- 1990 SOUTHWEST ARTS COUNCIL, GRANT TO OPEN EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS, HOLLAND IN PARTICULAR.

PUBLICATIONS

- 2006 CERAMIC REVIEW, PROFILE, JULY 06
- 2006 THE LEACH LEGACY, SECOND EDITION, MARION WHYBROW, PUBLISHED BY SANSOM AND CO.
- 2005 RAKU, SECOND EDITION BY TIM ANDREWS, PUBLISHED BY AC BLACK.
- 2004 JOURNEY TO ST IVES, KINSHIP BETWEEN EAST AND WEST, PUBLISHED BY MASHIKO MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ARTS.
- 2004 'MIMBRES POTTERS', ARTICLE WRITTEN BY JWASON, CERAMIC REVIEW 18.
- 2004 CRAFTS, EXHIBITION REVIEW OF SIX CHAPEL ROW SHOW.
- 2004 RAKU, TIM ANDREWS, FIRST EDITION.
- 1998 CERAMIC REVIEW, EXHIBITION REVIEW, ISSUE 173.
- 1992 IN THEIR ELEMENT, FILM BY TELEVISION SOUTHWEST.
- 1992 DICTIONARY OF BRITISH POTTERS, PAT CARTER, SCHOLAR PRESS.



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OPPOSITE  
STUDDED VESSEL  
45 x 40 CM

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14 x 52 CM



LSG  
Withiel