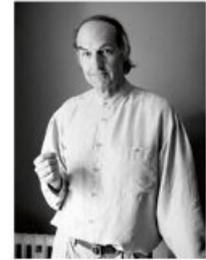




FOREGROUND FROM LEFT: *Clayed Friends I*, 2012 and *Remade - Home*, 2013 by Kerry Jamison, earthenware; *MANTLEPIECE*, Egg, 1977, by Eileen Neibel, porcelain; *Fig*, 1984 by David Garton, earthenware; *ABOVE MANTLEPIECE*, *White Solstice series*, 1971, by Ewan Henderson, ink on paper

## Private to public



When the Centre of Ceramic Art opened last year, one of the key elements was the recreation of domestic spaces from Anthony Shaw's home, filled with pieces from his acclaimed ceramics collection. David Whiting explores the story

The loan of the Anthony Shaw Collection was crucial to York Museums Trust's decision to make the city a national centre for the study of British studio ceramics. In addition to the famous Miller-White Collection, it had already been bequeathed collector Bill Kinay's several thousand pots and a large group of pieces from the gallery owner Henry Rodachid. York found the obvious place to Anthony Shaw, looking for a new home after exhibiting the collection for a decade in his west London house. Apart from being too small to show the breadth of work (by this stage over 800 objects, by well over 60 artists), the trust he established in 2009 decided that the sale of the house would give the Collection much needed financial stability. 'Feeling we needed to show to a wider audience,' Shaw says, 'we thought we should tie up with a public institution.'

He had vowed never to give his collection to a museum, unless it could be displayed in a domestic manner similar to its old home in London, or indeed to Kettle's Yard, Jim Ede's former residence in Cambridge, which showed how effectively art breathed among everyday objects and furniture. Jesse Barnes, the Chief Executive of York Museums Trust, had supported the collection from the outset and, as a result, Shaw broached the idea of a going to York. The collection's emphasis on sculptural ceramics would naturally complement York's more pot-oriented holding.

### THE START OF A COLLECTION

Interestingly, Shaw's initial interest was also in more traditional work. He was brought up in a house full of wares for everyday use, many of them bought from the Craft Pottery Association's shop in London. There were pieces by Michael Cardew, Ray Finch and Richard Bawolman, alongside industrial wares and contemporary glass. Then, as a young curatorial, Shaw began buying some of the vessel-based work of the 1970s. Soon he was exhibiting pots at his West Kensington workshop. He organised a group show that included John Ward and Val Barry, and gave displays to Gordon Baldwin and Ewan Henderson, significant moments which confirmed for him the wider sculptural potential of clay and his new direction as a collector. Other artists became important: constructors and hand builders like Gillian Lowndes, Sara Radstone and Bryan Hilday, who also worked in wood, metal and paint. For Shaw, clay is as good as any other material, and it depresses him that common perception rates it chiefly as craft. 'Few artists now entertain clay as a serious medium. It is very sad that any other substance is considered of higher value than clay.'

Since the collection went into trust, Shaw has continued to acquire avidly, always drawn to objects 'with my gut rather than my eye'. Of the work he likes, I ask if generosity is a key element? 'Yes, it is all about generosity,' he replies. 'Having always bought instinctively, and without any thought of "why", I am now getting much

Writer David Whiting reveals the story behind Anthony Shaw's dazzling collection of ceramics, much of which can currently be seen at York's Centre of Ceramic Art.