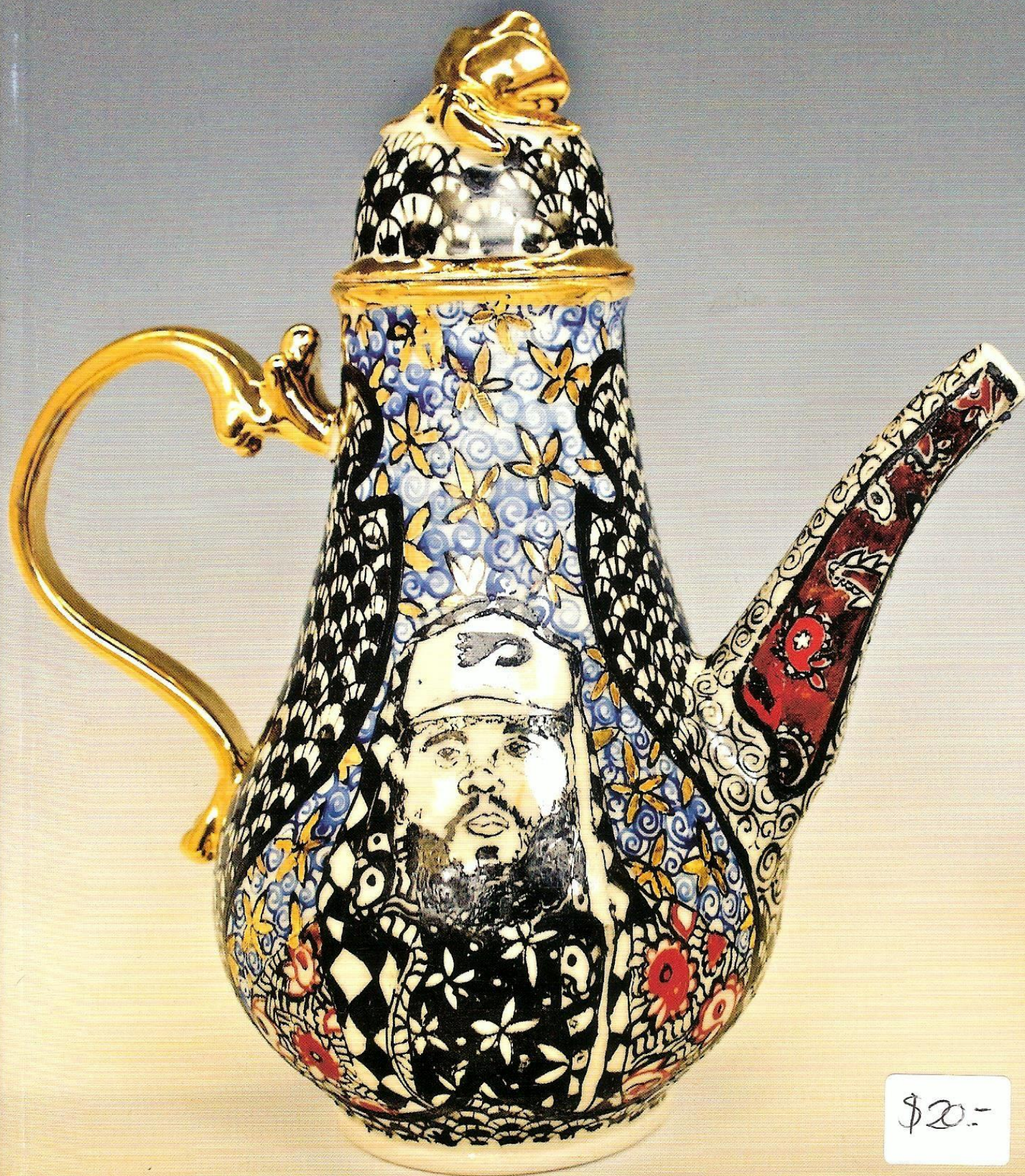


# Ceramics

Art and Perception

2014  
ISSUE 98

INTERNATIONAL  
US\$26 UK £10 CAN\$22-€17



\$20.-



# Unbounded

Kerry Jameson

*A Review by Bonnie Kemske*

“THINGS THAT AREN'T QUITE RIGHT.” THIS IS how Kerry Jameson has described what interests her. The exhibition *Unbounded* at Marsden Woo, London, certainly reflected this perspective. An eclectic display of subject matter and approaches, this new work has continued to solidify Jameson's position in the ceramics genre of the uncanny and grotesque.

Within Jameson's work to date it appears that she has three overlapping thematic concerns.

Some works seem dream-like, exposing a raw vulnerability laced with fears and anxieties. These works are often hybrids, Jameson employing this familiar trope successfully to explore the uncanny. Animals, humans and soft toys merge into figures that at once attract and repulse. It

is often in these pieces that Jameson exploits our discomfort of the gaze. A huge teddy bear, buried under strips of black canvas, stares out at us disconcertingly, pleading for rescue, but from what we are not sure. A toy horse, its head abusively bound in burlap, has glanced at us but now avoids our eye as if fearing more punishment. We sense the bear's and the horse's gaze on us, making us feel responsible somehow for their horrible predicaments, but powerless to assuage

their pain. In other pieces the gaze is removed, as the figures are of headless men. They do not look at us, but exist in an empty world; we look at them as men who are no longer on our plane of existence.



*Remade - Horse. 44 x 35 x 16 cm. Mixed media, earthenware clay, lead glaze and oxides, acrylic, string, glass eyes, clay cement, Hessian and shells.*





Contrasting these demanding dream-like figures are Jameson's illustrative historical narratives. These are stories retold in roughly modelled tableaux of miniature figures. *Pickett's Ridge* depicts the deciding engagement in the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War, where Robert E Lee of the Confederacy was outmanoeuvred by General George Meade of the Union forces. As in many battles, Lee's decisions seem hubristic, and ultimately cost the South half of its fighting force. Jameson's depiction is made up of eight parts. The figures are precariously poised atop Jameson's signature strut constructions, which are perceived as both supports and cages. This type of storytelling, although interesting, lacks the

intense engagement of her single figures and large-scale tableaux, and it is not clear what the child-like modelling of the figures adds to this piece.

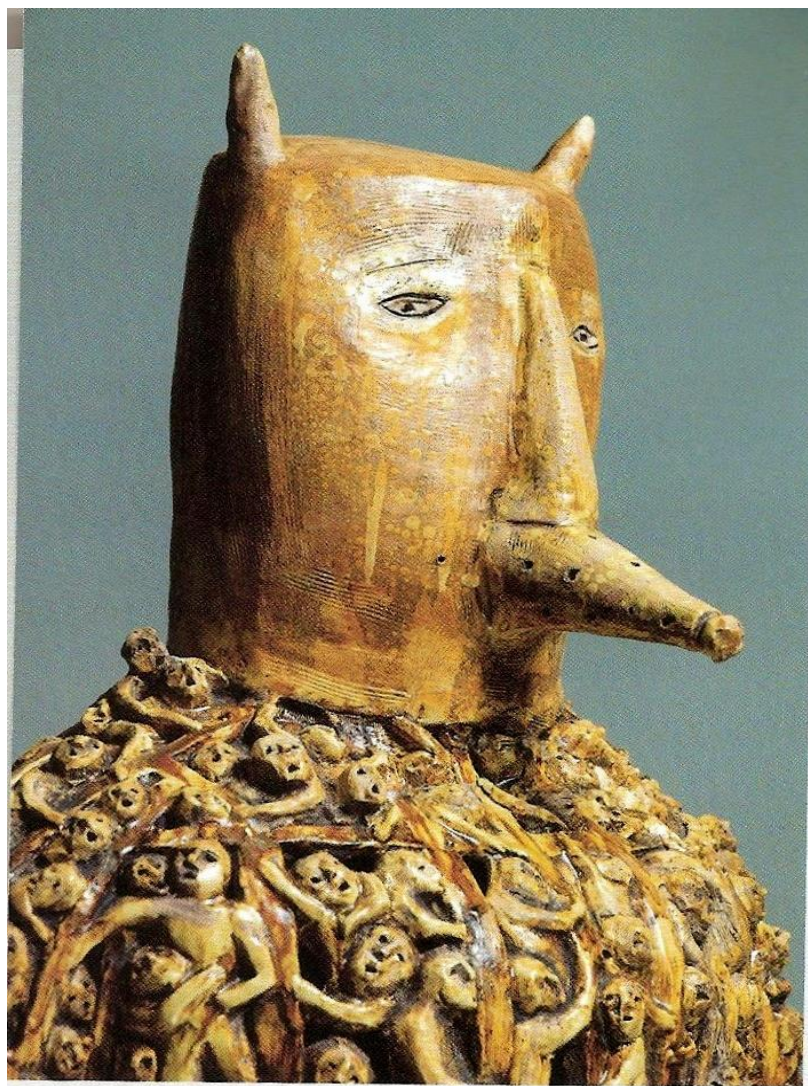
Bridging these two different themes is the third strand, that of folklore. Jameson draws on ancient tales that we have often heard of but rarely know well. 'The Wicker Man' is a legend of human sacrifice that has entered popular culture through films,

*Above: Pickett's Ridge. Eight sections, earthenware clay, lead glaze and oxides, clay cement, acrylics, Hessian, enamels, varnish and wood. 56 x 113 x 23 cm.*

*Below: Monkey (Incomplete) (Installation View). Mixed media, red clay, canvas, glass eyes, acrylic, varnish, red flocking, enamels and sheepskin. 69 x 48 x 41 cm.*







performance art and music. Jameson's *Wicker Man* is stiff and wooden, with a sieve-like mouth, crudely drawn eyes and an incongruous warm honey lead glaze. He is clad in a skin of writhing, mouth-gaping human figures, hanging on like crawling insects that trample and climb on top of one another. Like so many of Jameson's figures, the *Wicker Man* seems trapped and desperate and has an air of sad resignation.

In all of Kerry Jameson's work we see a disquieting sense of melancholic contemplation. Her *Monkey (Incomplete)* sits on a stool, all but human, bereft of companionship and deep in thought. His circus costume and missing forearm speak of a story we will never know. Works such as these are of an intensely personal nature. The figures seem to feel guilty in their secrecy and we feel contrite peering into what they have unwittingly and unwillingly revealed to us. Jameson's use of canvas and burlap wrappings increases this sense, as well as adding an element of threat and intimidation. The coverings can be seen as disguises, camouflage or punishment.

New to this exhibition is Jameson's *Remade* series. One figure follows through on the disguise theme: a young girl in a Peter Pan collared dress has been transformed into a swamp creature by the addition of a reptilian head. In other *Remade* works figures were brought together who may have never met: a giant stuffed toy of indistinguishable identity has





one arm around a young girl with beguiling eyes and another around a miniature horse, and a glass-eyed burlap-headed rabbit supports a menagerie of a raptor, a monkey-like creature and something that seems to be an ancient ritualistic human figure.

Coming out of the well-honed genre of the uncanny, which is often seen as an experience of something that is strange and alien while at the same time familiar, Kerry Jameson's work can be said to have moved on. This may be partly because we have grown accustomed to seeing such dystopian creatures and we no longer have such a visceral reaction to them. We are intrigued by these works, but not particularly disquieted. Perhaps any discomfort we feel comes not from the hybridity or grotesqueness of the figures, but rather from a sense that we may be looking into an artist's inner life, and hoping we will not also be drawn into such dark and threatening places.

Like many in the field of ceramics, Bonnie Kemske is a polymath, working as an artist, writer, critic and curator. She holds a PhD in ceramics from the Royal College of Art, London, publishes academically and in various art magazines. She was the Editor of *Ceramic Review* ([www.bonniekemske.com](http://www.bonniekemske.com)).

All works are from 2013. The exhibition was held 7 November – 21 December, 2013 at Marsden Woo, London.

All photos © Philip Sayer and courtesy of Marsden Woo Gallery.



Facing page, top left: **Wicker Man (Detail)**. Earthenware clay, lead glaze, oxides and Hessian. 57 x 51 x 27 cm.

Facing page, top right: **Remade – Standing Figure**. Mixed media, earthenware clay, lead glaze and oxides, acrylic, string, glass eyes, clay cement, Hessian and shells. 66 x 29 x 20 cm.

Facing page, below: **Remade – Group of Figures**. 62 x 38 x 31 cm.  
Base: 17 x 36 x 27 cm.

Above left: **Remade – Figures Combined**. Earthenware clay, lead glaze and oxides, acrylic, Hessian, string and glass eyes. 55 x 35 x 22 cm.

Above right: **Remade – Ceramic Bear Inside Canvas**. Red clay, lead glaze with oxides, canvas and flax, acrylic and glass eyes, wire and clay cement. 66 x 48 x 47 cm.

Below: **Kerry Jameson**.

