

Kerry Jameson

JOHN WARD
Cupped hands

SARA RADSTONE
Paper-thin paper clay

DEINIOL WILLIAMS
Ten years on

A Time Before Wolves

Andy Christian tours through the surreal world populated by Kerry Jameson's deliciously disquieting creatures.

Sixty years ago Kerry Jameson was known for her amazing ceramic sculptures of dogs. They were well observed, witty, and popular. Clearly they ultimately failed to register Jameson's concerns and heavily she has left them behind. One of these miniature creatures have emerged though she goes back to a time before wolves. They are unmechanized, untrained, and outside of our waking state though they might inhabit the surreal world of dreams, nightmares, and dark woods. You might find their like in the shadows of a Gothic Dark portrait or looking unobtainable in a dusty cabinet at The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. It is as if each creature infers a place in a narrative that that story is left unspecified, it hovers about them in an insidious way.

STILL ACTIVE, STILL LOVED Kerry Jameson found the way of working that she felt 'was right' after visiting the 2009 Tate exhibition The Royal Bank at the National Gallery, London. The twentieth-century polychrome sculptures there were made from wood, wax, resin, and with animal glue and strengthened with linen and glass. Heavy wood, glass eyes, and other fabrics had been added. She liked the idea that 'the sculptures were all active - returned - still loved and being dressed up'. She has developed her own version of glass using china clay and glaze and adds carves, beads, and jets to her fired ceramic pieces. In her introduction to her last exhibition at Morden Wo-Gallery (2011) she wrote: 'I want to keep my figure breathing, living, they have hearts and pulses, like

silhouettes they are about to step into action. Fabric for me has become a way of moving forward. I think that in a fight with permanence or the brittle nature of ceramic. If something feels too rigid, brittle, I break it up and reconfigure and so on. The next time I make for work more interesting and allow for accident and the unexpected. With the fabric I found and make the work stronger.

FISH FIGURES The sheer gentleness of her work may offend many and upset others. She acknowledges the power of African fetish figures, those bound with string, groups, and shells. Such forms were made to convey spiritual power and magic. In her own work, Jameson uses beads, clipped eggs, and glass-like eyes are embedded against the clay. Her drawings record museum displays of porcelaine dolls in a window, dolls like puppets. In other sketches, seated, warty dolls in a window, dolls like puppets. In other sketches, seated, warty dolls in a window, dolls like puppets. In other sketches, seated, warty dolls in a window, dolls like puppets.

What is most powerful and successful about Jameson's figures is their coherence. They are made of many materials but put together in a way that integrates. They remain the language in which clay has been used. There are plenty of examples from Han Dynasty (100BC-220AD) figures onwards of the being used in conjunction with other materials but most of these can be described as using materials side by side or explained by necessity. Jameson has been successful in connecting so that these materials are essential to her work. They are integrated as the nails, beads, and bolts are to African fetish figures. It may well be that the reader has to believe in the potential life force of what they are making for it to be transformed from 'teaching living' as the descriptor.

They might inhabit the surreal world of dreams, nightmares, and dark woods



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3 From left: 'Great' (Paper, heavy) 'Cupped hands' (Paper, thin) 'Paper-thin paper clay' (Paper, thin) 'Ten years on' (Paper, thin) 'Ten years on' (Paper, thin)



They are not demons but inhabitants of an interior world who have somehow escaped through Jameson's hands into our sanitised reality



FINDING NEW SKINS In some ways Jameson's work would come out of the little 'findings' but for these pieces lacked life. Nowadays in breaking, repairing, reworking, removing or adding parts, and finding new 'skins' for her figures she finds something else. In the meantime she's originally both often working with her clay. Not all of these figures are shocking like the crew that were said to have emerged out of Pandora's Box. They are not drawn but whitened on a neutral world who have somehow escaped through her hands into our sanitised reality. They need welcoming not kept because they will mark our imaginations.

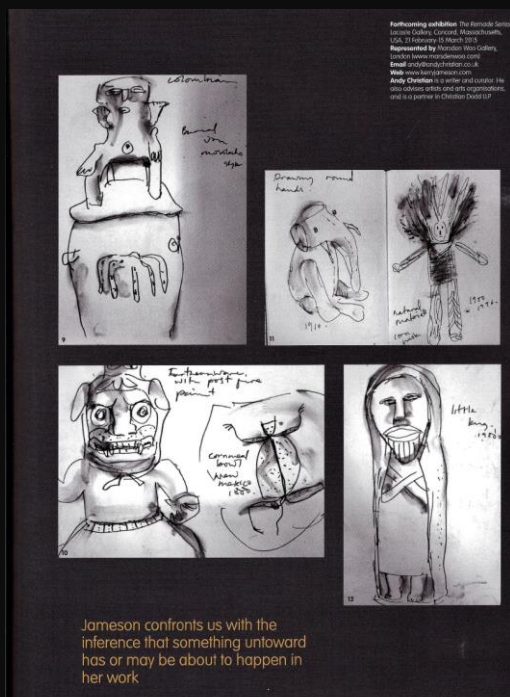
There will be many who are engaged in ceramics now who will find this mixing clay with other materials somehow without a care of the purity of the medium. There are others for whom any deflection from the quest for the perfect vessel is a later path. But she's earliest one seems to have been in the making of found figures and some 2000 years later Jameson has found a 'medium' in an extension of this ancient tradition. Such 'vessels' have taken her on an artistic path. As she works in her window-like cabinet. Next time she is surrounded by the found materials she has collected and by her finished and unfinished pieces. Her task is to put together the pieces to release the spirit of her creatures.

Essentially Jameson has found that, for her, cracked clay and broken ceramic pieces embrace and convey the language and expression of the medium. In reassembling and adding or having and fragments she feels that she has further developed a way of expressing the spirit of the medium. There is an old saying that a broken pot is a chance for another pot to make



a new pot. For her a cracked or broken form has become a way to develop more of a persona. The way she finds to reassemble or change is consistent with the other materials she seems concerned to work with in making her personality bigger and impossible to ignore. Some of the works are heavily layered, all but obscuring the ceramic base. The fabric, skin denies the hardness of the 'skelton'. This in turn creates in us a desire to touch them but most of the beads seem to give out a warning to the contracted hand. They might just bite.

RULES & BOUNDARIES Kerry Jameson has found a way of telling truths as they have been given to her to know. She has moved bravely away from decorative work to find things that lurk at a deeper level and which mirror darker aspects of the human condition. There are very powerful objects and she is one of very few artists working with ceramics who seem concerned to edge us forward and to challenge our premonitions. She is a rule-breaker and someone for whom boundaries must be broken down. It is clear that she has succeeded in leaving behind her a conservative craft, which houses few easy-going fellow travellers. She has told me that she is researching the work of Bernard Palissy (1500-1590) and his life casting of reptiles (he put the unfortunate creatures into clay while still alive). I can see why this might fascinate her. It can only lead to a further enrichment of her lexicon however carefully she distils these discoveries.



Jameson confronts us with the inference that something unworldly has or may be about to happen in her work