

SMOKE

Jason Jacques Gallery For Last Prisoner Project



An Exhibition about Pot(s) and the Prison System

Opening May 18th

SMOKE

Jason Jacques Gallery is thrilled to announce SMOKE, an exhibition in partnership with the Last Prisoner Project.

Situated in an environment designed by Rick Owens, SMOKE centers on seventeen contemporary artists' and designers' responses to a 19th century silver and cloisonné Smoking Set by the French jeweler Boucheron. It's a beautiful, troubling, and enticing art-object with a complex history that's relevant to many of the issues we encounter today.

SMOKE uses designers' and artists' ability to turn metaphor into reality to help transform our legal landscape. 100% of Jason Jacques Gallery's profits from contemporary art sales will go to the Last Prisoner Project, a non-profit organization focused on helping individuals incarcerated for non-violent cannabis-related convictions.

Opening Reception: May 18th, 2022 • 6 to 8 pm • 529 W 20th St, NY, NY

Rick Owens



Rick Owens' Design Environment

Owen's work—the environment designed for the show, Fog Machine included—speaks directly to atmosphere and aura, taking the idea of smoke to both its most literal and most abstract extreme. The space SMOKE is situated in is evocative of raves—lasers, strobes, and deep house extravaganzas in the dark.

The Fog Machine plays with the mood and atmosphere the Smoking Set creates around itself by engulfing its surroundings with smoke. As it spills its contents, clouds, plumes, and fog summon the languorous mood and mystique of the parties of yore. The space even touches upon the phantasmagoria of an opium den. It's the essence of a primordial kick-back, floating into the room alongside the heavy base notes of a rattling synth.

In this way, Owens cuts to the quick of the issue with a reference that is impossible to miss, conjuring up the aura of a party scene that epitomizes substance use as leisure, luxury, taboo, and transgression: an approximation of a fumoire transformed into a decadent, hazy cloud hovering above a dance floor.

Boucheron



Boucheron

Smoking Set, c. 1878

Silver with gilded and enamel decoration, and modern glass liner

13.50h x 13w x 12d in

Price upon Request

This rare smoking set was produced by Boucheron around 1878. It is made of gilded silver with champlevé, and includes several components, some of which are removable. The rounded triangular base is modeled as a cloud of smoke and sits on three feet with vermiclé decoration, the surface of which is etched with geometric patterns. The base is composed of a partly-inset tobacco jar with cover and openwork border, and topped by a fully-modeled geisha in a kimono and obi playing the shamisen, a Japanese string instrument. The set also includes an openwork lattice cigar holder; a detachable lighter formed as a caparisoned elephant with upraised trunk; an incense vase decorated with cloisonné enamel plum blossoms and geometric patterns; and a mei-ping form snuff container with fu-dog finial that is enameled with butterfly and dragonfly motifs.

Katsuyo Aoki & Shinichiro Kitaura





Katsuyo Aoki & Shinichiro Kitaura

Pipe for Piper at the Gates of Dawn (Functional Art: Pipe)

2022

Glazed porcelain

5h x 8.50w x 10d in

Price upon request

This intricate pipe, a collaborative work of art painstakingly sculpted by Katsuyo Aoki and intricately hand-painted by Shinichiro Kitaura, is a direct response to the Smoking Set's most decadent affectation: that, all at once, it is irresistibly tactile and yet too beautiful to touch.

Just as Boucheron once freely lifted, warped, and de-contextualized exogenous symbolic and decorative motifs— in the case of the Smoking Set, from East and South Asian art and crafting traditions— Aoki and Kitaura freely make use of Rococo flourishes and detailed, Delft-style cobalt underglaze to make their point.

Paul S. Briggs





Paul S. Briggs

Unstashed Pot I & II

2022

Glazed stoneware, cone 6 oxidation, slab, coil

9.50h x 8w x 11d in / 6h x 6.25w x 6.25d in

Price upon request

These Stash Pots boldly declare themselves as such. Their lids seem to cover nothing, which emphasizes yet hides that something is cached somewhere inside, contradicting the idea of a “stash” to begin with. Explicit and highly functional responses to the Smoking Set, these multifunctional vessels contain spaces for cannabis and paraphernalia. Briggs has superimposed his own well-developed visual language—incarceration, race, and justice—over an object which declares its own transgression. “What does it mean to uphold such an object with symbols of pain and imprisonment?” he asks.

The stash, for Briggs, recalls boyhood memories and the fear of being caught—especially if one was carrying a brag-worthy ounce. It’s a reminder that the culture surrounding cannabis is entwined with broader signifiers of wealth, privilege, and even bravado. Well aware that the nature of persecution for substance use depends on race and socioeconomic status, Briggs emphasizes that while the idea that cannabis and incarceration belong together is quickly becoming an anachronism it’s still a reality for many.

These stash boxes are unabashedly forthright. They can stand in the open, just as the Smoking Set did in 1878.

Nick Weddell





Nick Weddell

Beelzebufo (Functional Art: Pipe)

2022

Stained porcelain and glazes

7h x 10w x 8d in

Price upon request

Nick Weddell's fanciful smoking set dutifully approximates the intricate, ridiculous, extravagant, and deliciously overripe affectation of the Boucheron piece. Plainly ostentatious, oddly fungal and amphibian, absolutely alien, and uber-tactile, the nature of this object is at once inviting and electrifying. "Touch me I dare you," it seems to say, flashing its colors like a poison tree frog or an especially high-minded toad.

Like all of Weddell's works, this is an object from the planet Zeefromzee-glop. In as much, it is literally alien— it is "Other," in the utmost sense of the word. It begs the questions, where is the Other, what is the Other, and by what standards and why do we define our fellow human beings as "Other?" What makes us crave the allure of the "exotic" and simultaneously fear it— and what, to begin with, makes something "exotic?"

It also allows us an unreal glimpse into an extraterrestrial kick-back. What do they smoke on Zeefromszeeglop?

Johannes Nagel



Johannes Nagel

Moloch Pot

2022

Porcelain

27.56h x 12.99w x 12.99d in

Price upon request

The structured, crystalline form of this large work in bone-white porcelain seems to fall apart and come back together again— a crumpled paper note scrawled over with an inky, cobalt stain. Initially evocative of fuzzy, forgotten thoughts scribbled over dinner-party napkins, upon closer inspection it's clear that this vessel is inscribed with lines from Beat poet Allen Ginsberg's seminal work, *Howl*.

Moloch, Moloch: accusations made in all directions to no avail! As the words bleed into one another they become nearly ornamental as their meaning is almost, but not quite, overcome by their appearance, their rhythm. Echoing the poem's condemnation of cultural obsession with material wealth, power, debauchery, and appearances, this pot obliquely brings to mind that the widely celebrated beatniks themselves engaged in the same behaviors many people are punished for to this day. It's a work of art which rewards sustained attention, speaking directly to the pervasive, dualistic and tangled cultural attitude we have towards substance use as a whole.

Chase Travaille



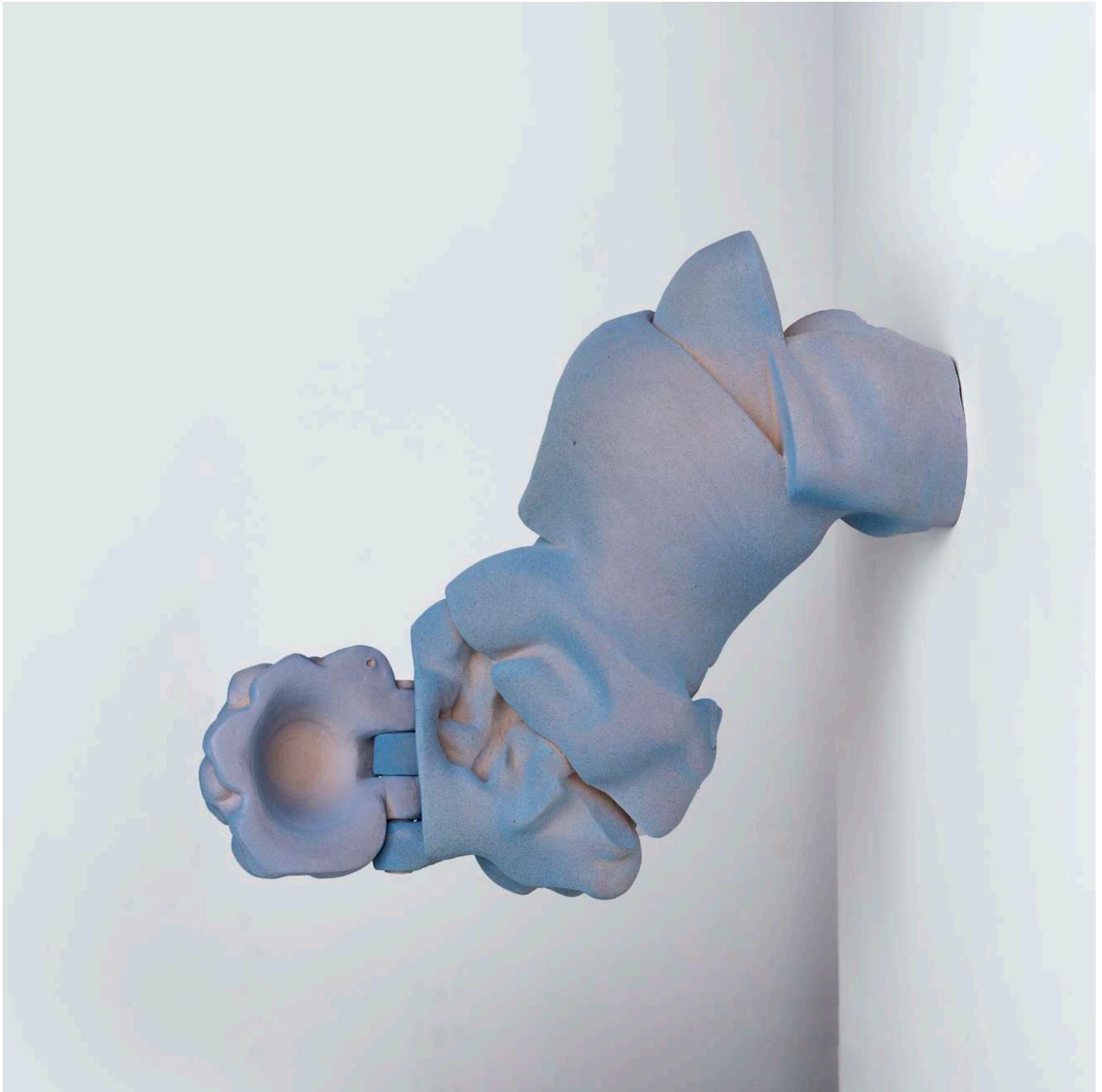
Chase Travaille
Shard Amphora No.13
2022
Ceramic shards, Epoxy
12h x 8w x 6d in
Price upon request

Travaille's choice to produce an amphora, the most recognizable typology of classical Western pottery, from bits and pieces blithely plays off of the Smoking Set's uncanny lack of cohesion: the Boucheron Set's 19th century designers' choice to combine elements from disparate cultures with the aim of producing an object that feels distinctly "exotic," but which is actually a perfectly Western work with origins grounded in an Orientalist fantasy.

This amphora, though, is a coherent whole: the fragment of a screaming face and the shard stained with sang de boeuf glaze, speak directly to entrapment and violence. The chains, a cheeky detail directly evocative of incarceration, are actually constructed from clay—they add a touch of trompe l'oeil that asks us to look past appearances.

This work of art includes shards from works made by: Maggie Jaszczak, Steven Lee, Chase Travaille, Kurt Anderson, Nick Weddel.

Anne-Marie Laureys





Anne Marie Laureys
Frozen & Ambition
2022
Glazed stoneware
27.95h x 10.50w x 19.69d in
Price upon request

This sculptural, wall-mounted cache turns the evanescent nature of smoke itself into a surreal and beguiling solid presence. Its visual poignancy stems from Laureys' uncanny skill at the potter's wheel. Using her talent to its full potential, she deconstructs and reconfigures a hand-thrown vessel into something other-worldly, nearly airbrushed—suspended like a digital form “clipping” through space.

The cerulean surface ripples like a flame rising, shifting, and vanishing before our eyes in a cloud of smoke, a flickering hallucination. In as much, Laureys' work shifts the focus away from the cultural context of the smoking set on display to its purported use. This object's inherent sense of ease ensures that it remains free of complexes; it hangs in the air like an exhalation, a phantasmagoric release of tension.

Kim Simonsson





Kim Simonsson
Elephant Mask Moss Boy
2022
Stoneware, Nylon Fiber
30h x 28w x 17d in
Price upon request

This masked figure, a Moss Child wearing an elephant mask with a knotted trunk, directly references one of the Smoking Set's most distinctive parts—the elephant, which is not only a sculptural element, but a functional lighter. But while the Boucheron piece uses the elephant as a signifier of the “other” or the “exotic,” Simonsson chooses subversion, turning it into a mere mask, an obfuscating ornament.

In doing so, Simonsson reveals a truth about the Smoking Set itself: the elephant lighter, just like the mask, is a part of a costume because the Smoking Set, just like the figure, is in disguise. Cloaked in exogenous cultural symbolism, the Boucheron is coyly presenting itself as something it isn't, masquerading as a gem that travelled the length of the entire silk road to get to your sitting room. It simulates The Other while obscuring its own plainly Western origins in search of an ever-higher level of fascination and intrigue, in spite having a quite-fascinating history of its own.

All the while, the Moss Child wearing the mask is enchanting. Trunk-tied and tongue-tied, he kneels before the viewer as though asking us to join him in contemplation.

Rem Denizen



Rem Denizen

As Above, So Below Altar

2022

Reishi, copper, maple, thermal adhesive, paint

25h x 15w x 15d in

Price upon request

In the artist's own words,

Smoke is a bridge between heaven and earth. It is a subtle twisting, whispering, whorl between worlds. Smoking is an elemental ritual that uses fire to turn earth into air, to connect body with spirit. Smoking and burning sacred plants is among the most ancient and universal techniques of liberating one's being from material constraints. It is a core technique of ecstasy that connects us back to Source.

Anything can be a medicine or a poison depending on intention and preparation. As is the way of industrialized, technophilic trajectories in modern times, smoke has been co-opted, desanctified, polluted and transformed into its worst possible, most toxic self. The exhaust smoke of the engine of capitalism now threatens our very existence. What does this seemingly cruel irony teach us about ourselves?

Aneta Regel





Aneta Regel
Multicontainer
2022

Stoneware & Porcelain with Rock Components & Multimedia
9.84h x 11.02w x 5.91d in
Price upon request

Regel has responded to the Smoking Set by way of understatement. In the face of the Boucheron's resplendent cloisonné, she presents the luxuriant, subtle, and visually thrilling variations in glaze and gravel that make her work so distinct.

This highly detailed, fantastically textured assemblage of containers timidly hints at the notion of a use and function. Like the Smoking Set, this piece is multi-faceted and its parts are nested within one another. The bright colors, rough-hewn surface, and highly naturalistic shapes and contours of this container form something between a stash-box and an ash tray which itself looks like something between coral and stone.

Allowing the clay and glaze to run amok in the kiln, she tosses aside the notion of an object which is explicitly or deliberately designed; Regel embraces the indeterminacy of glaze and fissures in the clay, bringing forth a mysterious configuration of forms that could just as easily be a geological anomaly.

Eric Serritella





Eric Serritella

Dispensary

2022

Glass

5h x 12w x 12d in

Price upon Request

This stash kit, titled Dispensary, translates Boucheron's 19th century Smoking Set into an equally delicate and enticing art object made from pate de verre. Following the gestalt of the antique set's triangular tray and stacked features, Serritella translates the given physical structure into a metaphorical one, arranging his vessels into an ephemeral, multi-tiered composition symbolizing the hierarchical and systemic, not arbitrary, nature of needless mass incarceration.

All the while, Serritella has fashioned this piece with a very holistic vision of cannabis use in mind; beyond smoke, spaces are provided for edibles, vaporizers, and tinctures, as well as traditional joints, pipes, rolling papers and matches. He has chosen joyful colors that border on the psychedelic and, like Boucheron, has included a vessel for incense— it is a work of functional art that doesn't force the discussion to linger on the negative, leaving us space to consider community and, above all, joy.

Bente Skjøttgaard



Bente Skjøttgaard
The Fossil #1930
2019
Glazed Stoneware
27.95h x 18.50w x 19.69d in
Price upon Request

Rather than producing a new work, Skjøttgaard has responded by re-visiting a pre-existing work that speaks directly to the enchanting visual form smoke in and of itself.

Rising like a plume, The Fossil #1930 encapsulates all of the micro and macroscopic things that produce and comprise smoke itself— from tiny chemical reactions to the shifting winds, combustion, heat, soot, ash, and above all else form. It's a bold and unburdened response to an incredibly convoluted and highly politicized issue. It's a straight-forward reply to the Smoking Set that uncomplicates the idea of 'smoke' and 'smoking,' reducing and elevating the issues at hand into simpler inquiries.

Isaac Scott



Isaac Scott

Three Black Men at Cecil B Moore and Broad

2021

Ceramic, Brick, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Pearl

49.75" x 48" x 16"

Price upon Request

Rather than producing a new work, Scott has responded by revisiting a pre-existing work of his that speaks directly to the problem of systemic violence against Black bodies.

Three Black Men hints at something totemic. The columns' texture is a direct reference to Philadelphia's ceramic history—the land's abundance of clay made it a distinctly brick city. Following the murder of George Floyd by a member of the Minneapolis Police Department, Scott (born and raised in Wisconsin) started documenting the protests and marches that erupted around Philadelphia, where he lives and works.

There, he witnessed black youth pull up pieces of concrete and brick from their surroundings, transforming oft neglected neighborhoods into both shields and weapons of resistance. Three Black Men, thus, is a monument to protest and resilience that makes visible the abstract traumas a body carries with it, and directly addresses the fact that black and brown people are disproportionately policed and incarcerated across the board—non-violent cannabis-related offenses included.

Roberto Lugo





Roberto Lugo

Dragon Pipe (Functional Art: Pipe)

2021

Glazed stoneware, slip, luster

2h x 8.50w x 3d in

Price upon Request

Tiger Ashtray (Yellow) / Tiger Ashtray (Green)

2021

Glazed terra cotta, slip, luster

2.25h x 3.25w x 2.75d in/ 2h x 3.50w x 3d in

Price upon Request

True to the thematic thread of Lugo's work, the ornamentation on this set of objects, painted and sculpted by hand, faces up to the broad history of ceramics. As Lugo takes on Western pottery's habit of appropriating non-Western motifs, he elegantly flips the script, making a pithy play on the European tradition of Orientalism as he covers it in an overlay of his signature graffiti script.

He is riffing on a riff, recontextualizing centuries-old iconographies and paying homage to underrepresented visual histories. The choice to do so using a set of objects familiar to a twenty-first century viewer is a case in point: this pipe and pair of ash trays are functional art objects, essentially disambiguated parts of the Smoking Set, that fix the issue at hand within the present moment. As these objects grapple with their historical context, immediate reality, and heady allure, they beg the question: who is welcome to participate and who will be punished for trying?

Gareth Mason



Gareth Mason

Dark Totem

2016

Porcelain, coarse black clay, jun and satin glaze, oxide saturated slip, iron rust, oxides, shard

14.50h x 11.50w x 6.25d in

Price upon Request

Rather than producing a new work, Gareth Mason has responded by re-visiting and re-purposing a pre-existing work that speaks directly to the idea of ritual.

Dark Totem, a two-piece vessel that looks to be something between an anvil and a mortar-and-pestle, is a totemic assemblage standing at the ready. Perhaps it's a ceremonial sort of grinder? The reticent object is cloaked in mystery; its function is not immediately apparent, nor necessarily extant— It sets the imagination afloat. Like a cryptic apparatus made to be consecrated in observance of an unsung truth, Dark Totem asks to be used but is unwilling to say just quite how, presenting itself only as a quasi-ritual object stripped down to its most basic, hypothetical essence: a tool kit.

Following this line of thinking, Mason asks us to apply the same enigmatic logic to the Boucheron Smoking Set. If we may boil it down to its essence (an aestheticized object with a purpose) we may by extension abstract smoking away into nothing more than a neutral human activity: a practice.

Shari Mendelson



Shari Mendelson

Anubis as a Horse with a Coat, 2019

Repurposed plastic, hot glue, resin, acrylic polymer, mica

13.50h x 4w x 12d in

Price upon request

Rather than producing a new work, Shari Mendelson has responded by repurposing and re-visiting a preexisting work that boldly toys with one of the exhibition's main themes: the relationship between past and present.

At first glance this sculpture appears to be an ancient artifact, perhaps found somewhere along the Nile, depicting Anubis as a centaur with a vessel balanced on his rear. But this seemingly antique object has distinctly contemporary origins: Mendelson sources her materials and assembles her pieces from the curiously wide repertoire of shapes provided by plastic consumer waste found on the street. Her work is never cast nor molded, merely cut and assembled so that each piece that makes up the whole maintains a bit of its own character.

A conceptual rather than practical response to the Smoking Set, this composite object draws upon the broader history of 19th century European Orientalism, namely the the frenzy for all things Egyptian that that peaked as the British Empire looted the region. It was the era of the Egyptian Revival movement, in which 19th century designers used all resources at their disposal to produce art decor that appeared overtly ancient and exotic. It begs the question: Do we, like our 19th century counterparts, fixate upon the past at the cost of our present?

LAST PRISONER PROJECT

The Last Prisoner Project is a national, nonpartisan not-for-profit that works to end America's discriminatory and counterproductive policy of cannabis criminalization, as well as to repair the harms of this unjust and ineffective crusade, by focusing on three key criminal justice reform initiatives: release, record clearing, and reentry programs.

Beyond release, record-clearing and reentry, the Last Prisoner Project also works to ensure their still- incarcerated constituents can access needed resources, healthcare, and phone calls by providing funding into their commissary accounts.

The Last Prisoner Project was founded in 2019 out of the belief that no one should remain incarcerated for cannabis offenses. They have brought together a team of cannabis industry leaders, criminal and social justice advocates, policy and education experts, and leaders in social justice and drug policy reform to work to end this fundamental injustice.

<https://www.lastprisonerproject.org/>
@lastprisonerproject

Jason Jacques Gallery is an American contemporary art gallery specializing in artists working in clay. Over its thirty year history, the gallery has both made its mark building museum collections of late 19th century European Art Pottery and become renowned for exhibiting some of the most exciting and influential international contemporary ceramic artists. Jason began his career in Europe three decades ago, combing through flea markets and antique shops for star pieces to send back to American dealers. He returned with a specialty in what he calls the Art Pottery Renaissance of the late-19th century— works by Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, Ernest Chaplet, Clément Massier, Georges Hoentschel, and the like.

After an explosive work by Gareth Mason caught his eye in 2010, he launched a program in contemporary ceramics, the prime focus of the gallery today. By placing Kim Simonsson's vivid, mossy figures, Katsuyo Aoki's porcelain masterworks, and Beth Cavener's animalistic sculptures alongside the Japonist creations of Paul Jeanneney or the biomorphic inventions of Beate Kuhn, the gallery lends historical context to the contemporary talent on their roster.

Jason and his team now not only maintain a rigorous contemporary program, but work to foster new talent. The gallery's mission is bolstered by careful attention to the history of ceramics and commitment to maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the medium's rich past.

www.jasonjacques.com
@ jasonjacquesgallery



