

Unearthed

Paul Philp

Unearthed is a solo exhibition by studio potter Paul Philp, featuring ceramics, relief works, and an alabaster sculpture, built by hand over the last 10 years in his home studio in Bath, United Kingdom. His work is informed by a fascination with ruins, antiquities, Asian art, and geology. “I’ve always had an enquiring mind about these subjects,” he says. “I have developed a vast collection of Asian and Tribal art catalogues over the years, as well as various antiquities, including an ancient Egyptian vase, a Buddhist terracotta sculpture, and hundreds of prehistoric stone artefacts, such as Native American arrow heads.”

A passion for stonework pervades Philp’s practice. He spent several years focusing on the renovation of Llansôr Mill in Monmouthshire, his home for 35 years, using reclaimed stone gathered from the surrounding countryside. “I would discover old farm buildings being demolished, and find exceptionally large stones that were beautifully aged,” he says. “It was my version of romantic archaeology.” His work is the product of a methodical, disciplined process: each piece might involve four or five high-temperature firings, whereby thin layers of black clay and iron oxide, liquid white China clay, wood ash, or other glazes are applied in stages to the surface of the ceramic, creating a uniquely rich, textural patina, as if the piece has eroded organically over time. By using a mixture of clays with different shrinkage rates to build each pot, Philp encourages subtle craters and imperfections to arise during the firing, recalling the natural weathering of stone. When living in Monmouthshire, he often mixed combustible organic materials into the clay, creating dramatic fissures and fossil-like impressions.

Philp’s work also demonstrates a deep sensitivity to form. A long experimentation with three-sided and four-sided vases has resulted in the refinement of a dynamic, shifted shape, where perspectives seem to merge across its gently tilted planes. “Vase shapes have always intrigued me,” Philp says. “I wanted the challenge of somehow making the epitome of a classic vase, but taking it further, beyond the traditional, rounded form.” Having settled on this four-sided shape over a decade ago, Philp continues to gain a nuanced understanding of its form through repetition, making only the slightest adjustments to each piece.

The unpredictable nature of the kiln provides a constant tension in Philp’s practice. His epitomic vase form arose from attempting to solve a problem with an exaggerated shallow vessel with a wide plane, which persisted to crack across the shoulders when fired. The perspective-shifting, four-sided shape evolved to overcome this fault. “Although I have since discovered how to fire those narrow, two-sided vessels successfully, the stresses and challenges of the kiln at the time led to its own artistic development,” Philp says. “I am just fascinated by the challenge of pottery—the balance of chance, learning, and careful, methodical thought. It is what motivates me to keep working.”



Paul Philp
POTTER

Paul Philp is a studio potter who has been making ceramics for over 50 years. Building everything by hand, he is free to create the forms his imagination requires, beyond the restraint of a potter's wheel. Each of his pieces undergoes a patient process of multiple high-temperature firings, where thin layers of finishing material are applied incrementally to the surface of the ceramic. "To get first-class results takes huge amounts of concentration," Philp says. "It is so easy to get distracted in today's world, so I keep a low profile and focus entirely on my pots."

Philp studied ceramics at Cardiff Art School, and has also dedicated much of his life to building, using traditional methods to work with reclaimed stone and other materials. His proficiency for stonework culminated in his personal renovation of Llansôr Mill, his former home in Monmouthshire, a 15-year project that saw his ceramic-making put entirely to one side. Since completing the renovation around 25 years ago, Philp has focused purely on his studio pottery, and now makes his pieces from his home studio in Bath, United Kingdom, in a mews house arranged around a courtyard, where he has lived since 2010.

Philp's work features in the permanent collections of the Musée des Beaux Arts in Montréal, the Cité de la Céramique in Sèvres, France, and the Musée Ariana in Geneva. He has exhibited solo shows at Brame and Lorenceau Gallery in Paris, at London's Contemporary Ceramics Centre, and at Willer on Holland Street, as well as Hedge Gallery in San Francisco, and the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford, California. Philp's work has also appeared in the shows and stands of his brother and art dealer, Richard Philp, in fairs across Europe and the USA, including at Grosvenor House Fine Art and **Antiquities** Fair throughout the 1990s, where Philp's work appeared alongside ancient, classical and Medieval art.

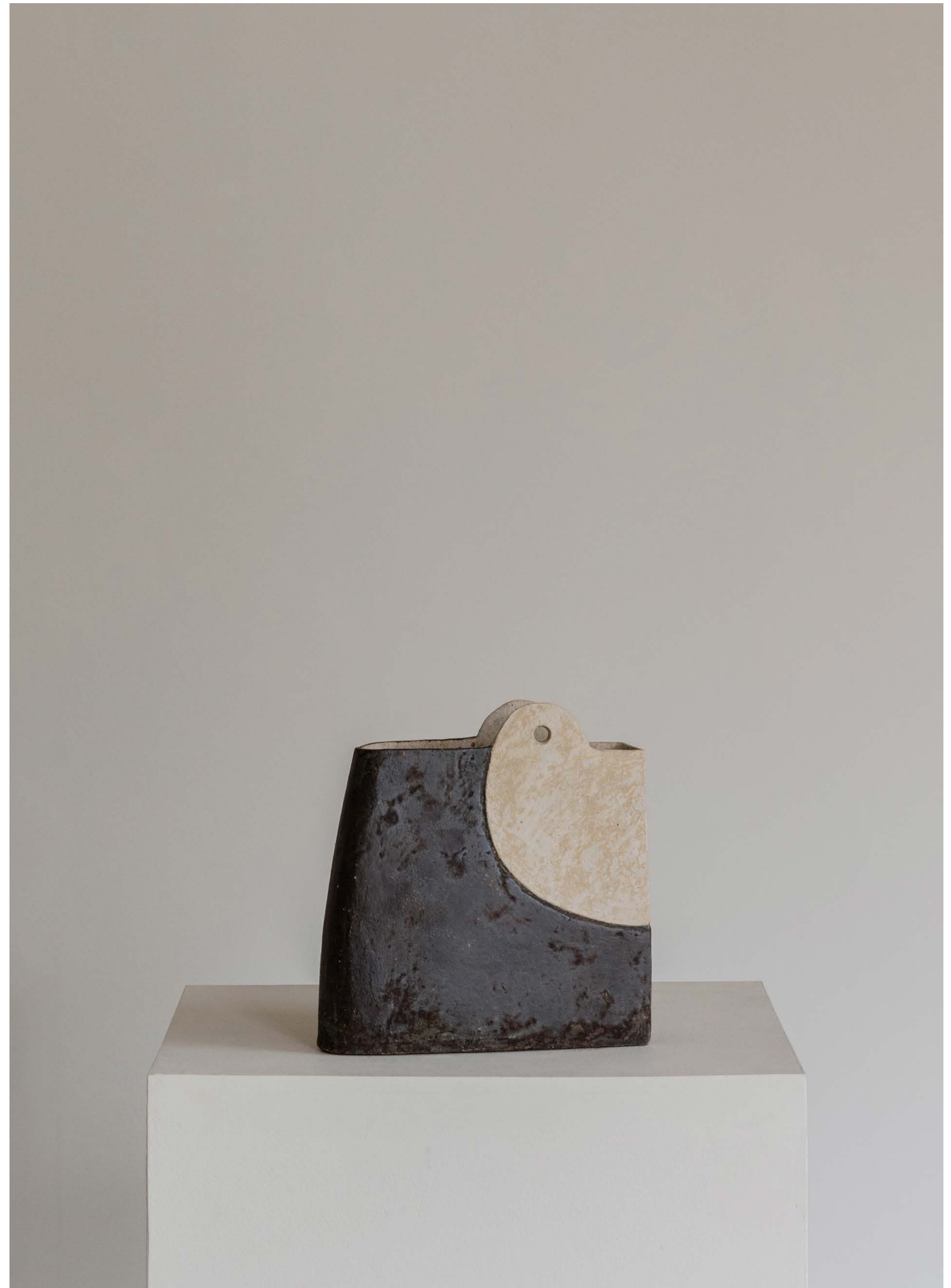
"In my work, for much of the last 25 years, I have been aiming at a sense of classical serenity, to evoke a certain feeling of timelessness," Philp says. Other than these simple acknowledgements, Philp does not wish to attach further meaning to his pieces, preferring to allow the viewer to trust in their intuition when experiencing his work.

1. UNEARTHED 01 (2015) —————	320mm x 180mm x 110mm Stoneware clay	11. UNEARTHED 11 (2015) —————	290mm x 390mm x 130mm Stoneware clay
2. UNEARTHED 02 (2015) —————	220mm x 230mm x 80mm Stoneware clay	12. UNEARTHED 12 (2015) —————	270mm x 430mm x 130mm Stoneware clay
3. UNEARTHED 03 (2015) —————	240mm x 155mm x 90mm Stoneware clay	13. UNEARTHED 13 (2015) —————	240mm x 440mm x 230mm Stoneware clay
4. UNEARTHED 04 (2015) —————	320mm x 140mm x 260mm Stoneware clay	14. UNEARTHED 14 (2015) —————	280mm x 520mm x 130mm Stoneware clay
5. UNEARTHED 05 (2015) —————	Ø 270mm x 180mm Stoneware clay	15. UNEARTHED 15 (2015) —————	280mm x 580mm x 270mm Stoneware clay
6. UNEARTHED 06 (2015) —————	320mm x 320mm x 110mm Stoneware clay	16. UNEARTHED 16 (2008) —————	1040mm x 630mm x 130mm Stoneware clay
7. UNEARTHED 07 (2015) —————	270mm x 350mm x 140mm Stoneware clay	17. UNEARTHED 17 (2015) —————	380mm x 523mm x 180mm Alabaster
8. UNEARTHED 08 (2015) —————	430mm x 370mm x 280mm Stoneware clay	18. UNEARTHED 18 / POROS 2019 (2019) —————	317mm x 267mm x 20mm Acrylic on wood
9. UNEARTHED 09 (2015) —————	290mm x 390mm x 110mm Stoneware clay	19. UNEARTHED 19 / IDHRA 2019 (2019) —————	300mm x 257mm x 20mm Acrylic on wood
10. UNEARTHED 10 (2015) —————	255mm x 390mm x 40mm Stoneware clay		





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14. UNEARTHED 14 (2015)



15. UNEARTHED 15 (2015)



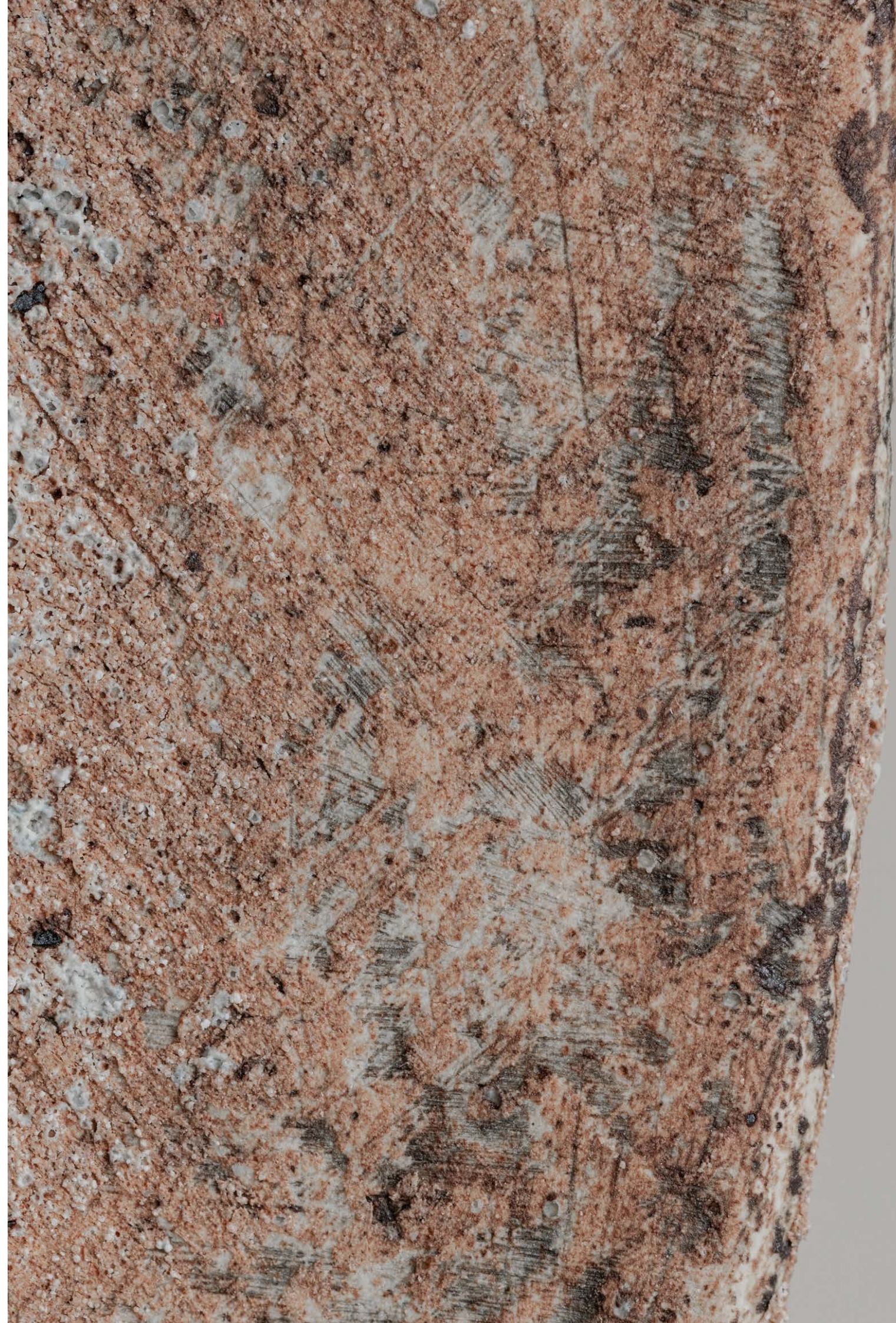
16. UNEARTHED 16 (2008)



17. UNEARTHED 17 (2015)



18. UNEARTHED 18 / POROS 2019 (2019)



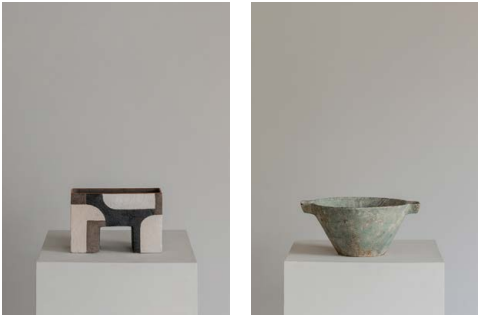


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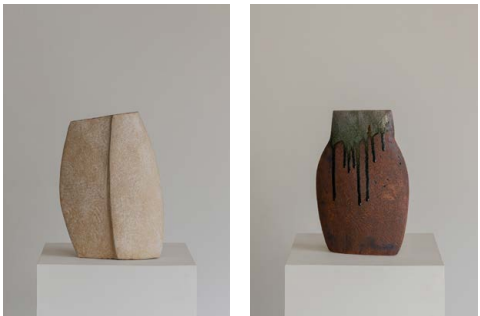


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