

# David Roberts

## *The Meaningful Vessel*

*Galerie de l'Ancienne Poste*  
24 March – 3 May, 2018

*"The Meaningful Vessel"*... Rarely has an exhibition title carried such significance. "Meaningful" can be understood here as expressive, eloquent as well as open to interpretation, while "vessel" has the dual meaning of container or craft, both of which imply a carrying function. The world of David Roberts, an English ceramic artist born in 1947 in Sheffield, is conveyed perfectly in this exhibition. His earthenware pieces do not claim to be utilitarian or functional in any way, as he likes to emphasize, but rather they are the repository of his ideas and his sensations as an artist and a human being. His decidedly contemporary pots and bowls carry within them the echo of the gestures that have shaped West African earthenware jars or pre-Columbian ritual vases – of that roundness imprinted by the hand. Yet they are also the incarnation of the landscapes that have traversed his life: the wild hills of his native Yorkshire whose moors, stonewalls and tracks he conjures up with his firing marks, or the mountains furrowed with ravines by the torrential rainfalls on the steep New Zealand shores. Introduced in the 1970s to Raku, the Japanese technique used for making bowls intended for the Tea Ceremony, Roberts has since become one of its most dexterous practitioners and has also inspired its rediscovery in the United States. Most importantly, he has created his own language of "Naked Raku", a complete absence of glaze on the object's surface that leaves the material entirely free to express its primary nature. Ripples, erosions and fault lines thus make up the stanzas of a universal chant.

Valérie Bougault  
*Art critic*

Translated by Marina Duval Matthews