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What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week



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By ROBERTA SMITH, WILL HEINRICH, MARTHA SCHWENDENER and JASON FARAGO DEC. 20, 2017



Ursula Morley Price's «Slim Butterfly Mouth Form,» from 2017. Credit 2017 Ursula Morley Price/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Studio Mazère/ McKenzie Fine Art

The New York Times
20 décembre 2017

Ursula Morley Price

Through Dec. 23. McKenzie Fine Art, 55 Orchard Street, Manhattan; 212-989-5467, mckenziefineart.com.

In her works, the British ceramic artist Ursula Morley Price strikes an exquisite balance between glazed clay as vessel and as sculpture, with nature and ancient art adding fruitful complications. These stoneware pieces, glazed with either vellum whites or bronzy browns, evoke bowls or vases in their symmetry and roundness, their open, hollow interiors, and their use of the age-old pinch-and-coil method. But at every turn, they defy convention, establishing their autonomy with articulations and exaggerations of a sculptural, even architectural kind, and rich resonances of meaning and beauty. You would not think of using them.

Ms. Price pursues a kind of discreet excess, a restrained too-muchness. The bodies of her vessels have deep riblike folds like those found on accordions, ruff collars or exotic cactuses. The ribs often curve back and forth in unison as they move from foot to rim creating the effect of underwater life undulating in ocean currents. And when the ribs reach the necks, watch out. Sometimes they erupt in bladelike flanges that conjure a bouquet of elegant axes or the great rope-patterned pottery of Japan's ancient Jomon period. In the bowllike forms, the ribs culminate in round, petal-like flanges that curve like spinning turbines, or more sea life. And in a new configuration, the vessels swell out like pleated shirt fronts and narrow to smooth plantlike necks reminiscent of Georgia O'Keeffe's flowers. Throughout, every protuberance is thin and delicately rough-edged, like deckled paper.

Ms. Price, who is 81, is not unknown. She has shown her work in Europe since 1974 and the United States since 1988, and is represented in major museums. But she deserves greater visibility, especially with so many contemporary artists up to their elbows in clay. Her achievement lies in disrupting the usual seamless unity of ceramic form, revealing a series of remarkable constituent parts orchestrated into a new whole. It's something like Busby Berkeley, absent the women, in clay.

ROBERTA SMITH