

## Brilliant Earth: The Ceramic Sculpture of Tony Marsh On View at the Long Beach Museum of Art

Exhibition Dates:

October 22, 2022 – March 19, 2023

(Long Beach, CA, Oct. 11, 2022) The Long Beach Museum of Art is pleased to present *Brilliant Earth: The Ceramic Sculpture of Tony Marsh*, the first solo museum exhibition for the renowned contemporary sculptor and ceramicist. Organized by the Long Beach Museum of Art, this survey exhibition comprises more than 50 works spanning 50 years, from 1972 to the present. The work is presented in 4 upstairs galleries giving viewers the opportunity to move through the history of Marsh's work with the vessel form epoch by epoch.

*Brilliant Earth* will present an exquisite collection of works—many that have never been in public view—from Marsh's early series titled: *Water, Marriage, Fertility and Creation Vessels*, to his iconic *Perforated Vessels*, and through to his most recent and ongoing series, *Spill and Catch, New Moon Jars, Crucibles and Cauldrons*, aptly named after instruments that engage fire and transformation.

While Marsh's life's work as an artist has remained unflinchingly in the territory of the ceramic vessel, the work is uniquely his own. The result of ceaseless curiosity and focus, the artist has identified areas of intense artistic interest and explored these ideas with rigor until they were exhausted. The exhibition includes a diverse range of work from throughout Marsh's career, from measured, somber meditations on the natural world to diaristic vessels that commemorate essential events in human experience, to eruptive celebrations of color and texture. Numerous works in the survey have never been exhibited before. Within the complex of galleries there is a taped discussion on view with the artist and Southern California Art Writer / Critic Leah Ollman in which Marsh discusses his life as an artist and educator.

Says Marsh. "Creating with clay—as has been the case with teaching—have been parallel life pursuits. However different they may be, I understand them both as tremendous instruments for learning and self-actualization" Marsh is an artist celebrated for his dedication to a practice that spans 4 decades. He engages and challenges the material, the history of high-craft skill sets and ceramics craft protocols. There is a restless curiosity about how one might bring meaning to ceramic vessels in a contemporary art context.

While not utilitarian, Marsh's early vessels engaged with pottery from around the world as subject matter in an homage to what the medium has traditionally been called upon to do; preserve, hold, offer, ritualize, commemorate and beautify. In that way Marsh activated the internal arena of his predominantly horizontal open archetypal vessel



forms and filled them symbolically with personal and cultural meaning all the while engaging a somber earth toned palette.

Over the course of the last 15 years Marsh has entirely refocused his approach philosophically and practically by activating the external surface of vertical forms. There has been a pronounced shift towards encouraging unpredictability, the embrace of failure, intuitive impulse and subversion of craft protocols. There are no notes taken through the course of multiple firings which sets the stage for the artists approach to freely following results rather than trying to predetermine them while exploring the unique transformational, phenomenological nature of ceramic materials subjected to heat. The *Crucibles, Cauldrons, Spill & Catch* series and *New Moon Jars* produced in the past decade are a celebration of eruptive color and texture as Marsh sculpts as much with glaze and color as with clay.

“It is an honor for this institution to exhibit the work of Tony Marsh, an amazing artist whose achievements are boundless, and we are pleased to share them with the Long Beach community and its visitors,” says Ron Nelson, Executive Director of the Long Beach Museum of Art. “Marsh has been an international leader in contemporary ceramics and has taught, inspired, and mentored many exceptional contemporary artists.”

Born in 1954 in New York, Tony Marsh grew up in central California and is currently living and working in San Pedro. He earned a BFA in Ceramic Art from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) spent three years in the workshop of Tatsuzo Shimaoka in Mashiko, Japan and earned his MFA from Alfred University, NY. Marsh, a professor at CSULB, chaired the Ceramics Department for 25 years (1989-2015) and Co-Founded the Center for Contemporary Ceramics, a national and international residency program on the CSULB campus connected to the Ceramic Arts Program and was its first director.

He has exhibited his ceramic art in Asia, Europe and across the United States in solo and group exhibitions since 1992. His ceramic sculpture is in over 30 permanent Institutional collections around the world, including SFMOMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY); Everson Museum (Syracuse); MAD Museum NY, LACMA, Los Angeles, M+ Museum Hong Kong, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Long Beach Museum of Art; Oakland Museum of Art and more.

Additional programming will complement *Brilliant Earth: The Ceramic Art of Tony Marsh*, including artist lectures and a limited edition, hardbound book for this exhibition.

Private foundations and collectors generously support the exhibition:

BCM Foundation • Evalyn M. Bauer Foundation • The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation • John Fielder and Donita Van Horik • Pam and Dan Munzer • Dr. Ronald and Sylvia Hartman • Bess J. Hodges Foundation • Josephine Molina and Heather Rudy • Anton and Jennifer Segerstrom • William Gillespie Foundation

### About the Long Beach Museum of Art

The Long Beach Museum of Art founded in 1950 is one of the oldest cultural institutions in the City of Long Beach. The Museum has grown into a nationally recognized art museum known for its outstanding permanent collection, innovative educational and community programs, and intriguing rotating exhibitions. For over 70 years, the Museum has cultivated a space for students, educators, and art enthusiasts to find solace and inspiration. The Museum is a community anchor for the visual arts and an essential player in the city's education infrastructure.

### Communications

#### Contact

Ronald C. Nelson

Executive Director

T 562 439 2119 ext. 226

[ronn@lbma.org](mailto:ronn@lbma.org)