



JASON WASON
AT 80
RETROSPECTIVE

2026



Salt Glazed Bowl
Leach Pottery, 1979
Ceramic
Unique
9 x 20 x 20 cm

Teapot, 1981
Ceramic with Bamboo
Handle
Unique
23 x 16 x 13 cm

Rare Earth: Jason Wason's Poetics of Clay and Bronze

'Mind your head!' I duck, just in time, under a low timber lintel. Outside, the summer sea-light dazzles; inside the shed, it's dusk, hot. My eyes adjust. Both side walls are lined with shelves, on which pots of different shapes and sizes sit or lie, as if nested in a columbarium. This one, says Jason, lifting out a smallish salt-glazed bowl, came from the first kiln he fired by himself, as a project, after his initial apprenticeship at the Leach Pottery in St Ives, where he worked as an assistant for five years from 1976. At that time the pottery was run by the American ceramicist Janet Leach, with her husband, the legendary but now elderly Bernard, an occasional but powerful presence. After constructing his own wheel and learning to throw at the Dumfriesshire self-sufficient crafts community he'd set up in 1972, Wason's job at the Leach mainly entailed throwing the domestic 'standard ware' range, including mugs, jugs, bowls and teapots, all from a Cornish stoneware clay extracted from the cliffs of St Agnes. Through this routine daily labour at the wheel, he honed the skills and intuitive feel for clay that would shape his own, very different idiom.

The salt-glazed bowl was followed by larger urns or jars with spreading, skirt-like bellies, decorated with bold chevron patterns that give them a tribal African air. These are, clearly, objects to be contemplated, touched, rather than put to household use. I want to hear how they'd ring, flicked or tapped with a finger. Yet they also seem strangely *untouchable*. If I had one at home, I'd be tempted to clear the room of other objects, to simplify the habitat, as the forest floor simplifies itself around an oak.

Wason would have been in his mid-thirties when he made these early pots, not so far beyond the adventures that preceded his journeyman years at the Leach. One night, when he was seventeen, he'd left a note for his parents, climbed out of a window in the family home and for almost a decade travelled the world, hitching, making ends meet – three months in Afghanistan, Dharamsala in India with the Tibetan refugees, deportation from Iran, a brief spell in a Bulgarian border jail ... Tell me more, I want to say, the whole story.



Brown and Black Bowl
(Small), 1982
Ceramic
Unique
8.5 x 17 x 17 cm

right
Brown and Black Bowl
(Large), 1982
Ceramic
Unique
17 x 34 x 34 cm





By this point, we're in Wason's studio, a smallish, high loft space, reached via a ladder through a trap door. There are four throwing-wheels – the electric wheel he now prefers, and, in other corners, a Leach-style kick-wheel, an aging Japanese Shimo given him by Janet Leach, and a wooden continental kick-wheel once owned by the studio potter Hans Coper, whose work has the kind of monumentality that prompts comparisons with Wason's. Around us, large pots stand silent, listening in. Wason speaks of childhood visits to the Merseyside docks, where his father worked for a timber importing business. He read the names of ships carrying timber from Rangoon in Burma, from Ghana, and wanted to see for himself the places from which such vessels crossed the ocean, freighted with elsewhere. *Vessels* – which is also a word for pots, it occurs to me.

No question, the years of youthful wanderlust still find expression in Wason's pots. If you'd never encountered his work before, the geographical origins of pieces such as *Monumental Red Vessel* (2010), say, or *Guarded Bowl* (2016) might be hard to guess. Medieval Japan, or pre-Columbian South America, maybe? possibly not twenty-first-century Cornwall ... At the same time, since 1976, when Wason settled with his young family at Botallack, a former mining village on the boot-cap of the Land's End peninsula, a sense of rootedness in the life of this thin-skinned, hard-boned landscape has been equally formative. Viewed from Wason's studio yard, engine-house ruins and chimney-stumps punctuate the Atlantic cliff-line like a child's drawing. There are granite walls on the slopes uphill that may have been heaped from fieldstones around the same time that potters in ancient Mesopotamia came up with the idea of the throwing-wheel. Wason speaks of 'the daily overwhelming impression of living here', with 'the mighty ocean landscape in front of me. Exhilarating, ever-changing, cloudscapes, sunsets, torrentials, each day the weather sets the mood of the day.'



Monumental Red Vessel, 2010
Ceramic
Unique
50 x 46 x 46 cm

Guarded Bowl, 2016
Ceramic
Unique
21.5 x 43 x 48 cm



Templetop Vessel, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
38 x 45 x 45 cm



The Meeting, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
20 x 36 x 16.5 cm



Mother's Bowl, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
30 x 55 x 43 cm

Guarded Box, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
25 x 57 x 37 cm

Wason doesn't 'play with the clay', as some ceramicists do, letting the medium guide him. For him, it's the opposite: he first needs, he says, to find in himself a poise, a 'stillness': 'Before I can centre the clay, I must centre myself. Only then can the work begin.' And the form his hands will shape is already present in his mind's eye. There are certain 'recurrent structures' that have preoccupied him for more than forty years of working with clay, among them the 'Mother's Bowls' with their breast-like protrusions, the stupa-like 'Templetop' form, the 'Preservation Boxes', 'Guarded Vessels' and 'The Meetings'. These series reflect 'an inner dialogue that I still grapple with in my own unique way'.

Where do they come from, these forms? Not from a modern studio pottery repertoire but from deeper strata of ceramic art – ancient China, South America, Africa, and Japan, where Wason held a series of residencies in the early 2000s, working in Seto with the Japanese ceramicist Yasuo Terada. Wason is 'content when a piece of work that I made yesterday could just as well appear to be a thousand years old'. Yet there is nothing antiquarian about this dialogue with the past: as statements, Wason's forms arise from the contemporary moment in which they're made. In 1990, he explained how,

The balancing of the tensions in the pot between the hard and the soft lines generates its character. Sometimes I can use this to reflect on the tensions within myself. In effect I am the pots. At the same time, while trying to create a pot that has poise and integrity, I find that I am little more than a spinning top, ricocheting from action to reaction, with some kind of as-yet-unresolved attachment.



Stop Calling Dead Children Collateral Damage You Fuckers, 2026
Ceramic and Shoes
Unique
35.5 x 55 x 55 cm

While any object made by hand reflects the maker, Wason takes clay's expressive potentialities a stage further, into autobiography and even, on occasion, global politics. There have been times when 'world events are so shocking that they find their way into the pots'. His 'Conflict Series' (2009 onwards) references the terrible toll on civilian populations of warfare and persecution across the Middle East (birthplace of urban society and the potter's art): *Broken Promises*, *The Towers* (both 2012), *Torn Bowl* (2014) and, most explicitly, *Stop Calling Dead Children Collateral Damage You Fuckers* (2026), a monumental bowl whose rim is pierced by sixteen four-inch nails. Cradling a single pair of children's shoes, this work 'reaches out helplessly to the thousands of young children murdered in Gaza'.

The interplay between material and form entered a new phase when, in 2009, at the invitation of Rungwe Kingdon, Wason began a collaboration with Pangolin Editions that involved casting his pots in bronze and other metals. Struck by the 'potent narrative content as well as sensual and formal integrity' of Wason's work, Kingdon was also intrigued by the technical parallels between ceramics and metal-casting, the kiln and the foundry. The lost-wax casting process involves the use of clay moulds and cores in the production of hollow bronze objects. 'Pots resemble moulds', observes Kingdon, acting 'like a bridge between pure ceramics and pure sculpture'.

Both clay and metal technology depend on the metamorphic agency of fire; and I would guess that, in the early millennia, vessels that emerged from flames, embers and ashes were not seen merely as useful, manufactured things, since they had, in a sense, been born as well as made. Which gives the formal relationship between interior void and exterior surface a special resonance, a mystery. In Wason's work, because there is no question of a pot's having either a mainly utilitarian function or decorative appeal, you feel this relationship particularly strongly.



Silent Witness, 2009
(Conflict Series)
Bronze
Edition of 5
165 x 24 x 24 cm

In their form and history, clay pots embody both containment and connection. Take the amphorae of the ancient Mediterranean – the ubiquitous pottery container-units of seaborne trade, used for shipping wine and plant oils. These roughly cylindrical or conical vessels had tapered bases, designed to sit upright in ballast in a ship's hull. One of Wason's first pieces to be cast in bronze, *Silent Witness* (2009), is amphora-shaped; the translation from clay to bronze allowed him to have it mounted vertically on a plinth without risk of fracture.

This ancient vessel stands in my mind's eye as having an anthropomorphic quality, with its stance and its vestigial arms as handles. As such, I envisage this bronze amphora standing quietly as a silent witness to the ever-unfolding drama of the political, cultural and social events that surround us.

The ceramic amphora titled *Broken Promises*, turned sideways and mounted in a wooden cradle, overtly suggests a missile in its emplacement. Same shape, different angle.

The amphora-form, in other words, bears witness to a primal 'tension' in human nature: the desire to connect and the urge to destroy – or, to frame it in Freudian terms, eros or love, and *thanatos*, death. This duality may help to explain why some of Wason's pots, in their nature as containers, project a distinctly unsettling ambivalence: you can't be sure whether their contents – absent but imagined – are destined for nourishment or burial, the table or the tomb.

Working with Pangolin, Wason has also cast examples of his 'Preservation Boxes'. These are flat, squarish objects, with defensive or apotropaic bosses on the sides and a small lidded cavity in the centre. Inside the cavity in one bronze box he placed a 175 million-year-old *Perisphinctes* ammonite from Madagascar and the 5 million-year-old tooth of a *Megalodon*, found off the coast of South Carolina. The title *Devil's Box of Tricks*,

alludes to the creationist and fundamental Christians' belief that their "God" created the world in seven days. Presented with fossil evidence to the contrary in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, their view was that the Devil planted fossils to trick us.

As has often happened in the course of Wason's career, there is also a transcultural, transnational aspect to the Pangolin collaboration: the Leach-style kick-wheel he gifted to the Ruwenzori Foundation in Uganda – a Pangolin offshoot – has been much used and enjoyed by Ugandan artists in the Foundation's wider project of creative, social and environmental regeneration.



Devil's Box of Tricks, 2009
Bronze with Sand, Perisphinctes Ammonite and Megalodon Sharks Tooth
Edition of 5
7.5 x 46.5 x 44.5 cm

Bronze is the right material for the 'preservation boxes' because Wason wants them to be 'bomb-proof'. Literally? Yes. And this impulse – to preserve, protect, to ward off harm – goes way back, he believes, to early childhood. Born one year after the end of the Second World War, he grew up in the long aftermath of the Liverpool blitz, which devastated the docklands area near his family home in Bootle. He recalls the razed streetscapes, in which homeless men crouched beside fires lit in the rubble. An awareness of needing to be prepared for imminent mortal danger was still very much in the air, with his grandmother's additional superstitious fear that the sight of lightning would cause blindness. During thunderstorms, 'she shepherded the family, mostly children and aunties, to take cover, either under the stairs or in the rudimentary bomb shelter that still stood in the back yard.' Huddled in semi-darkness, Wason listened to their stories of the war, soaking them up 'like blotting paper'.

It's no accident, then, that the surfaces of his clay pots, created not through conventional glazing but by abrasion and the rubbing-in and repeated firing of metallic oxides, often suggest some kind of ceremonial armour, with their lambent, burnished reds or steely-velvet brown-greys. No accident, either, that we describe pots in terms of body parts – lips, necks, shoulders, bellies, feet. When Wason says, 'I am the pots', it's more than rhetoric. If making pots is a whole-body practice, engaging the feet, legs, torso, arms, hands and eye, then the pot itself represents a whole-body story. In this 'narrative' aspect of his art, it turns out, Wason has more in common with his one-time employer and mentor Bernard Leach than he does in his ceramic practice. Leach was a master storyteller-in-clay, for whom a single simple pot could play host to a grand cultural coming-together of East and West. For Wason, a pot's ability to exist outside in the world, while being able to survive whatever the world throws at it, is maybe – when everything else is stripped away – its essential quality. And what holds good for the ancient world may prove true for us too: after the earthquakes and burnings, the floods and bombs, there will still be stories to piece together from pottery shards, those silent witnesses that carry the past work of human hands, at times as if hardly spilling a drop, into the future.

Michael Bird



Monumental Red
Preservation Vessel, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
55 x 45 x 45 cm

Sentinel, 2009
Ceramic
Unique
58 x 34 x 19 cm

Artist's Statement

Roger Hilton used to say never discuss your inner workings. I can see the validity in that, in as much as the works themselves are manifestations of many and complex patterns of thought, and are not the final resolution of an idea but quite often just one part of the unravelling and further understanding of something. In other words, they are all works in progress. I think it's almost impossible to gather all those subtle references and influences and successfully pass them on to someone else, but as I am now eighty and this is my retrospective show, I am going to throw out a few words to attempt to throw some light on it.

There are particular structures that are recurrent in my work over many years.

Protection

Boxes, chambers, casques ... various structures that I build to hold, protect and preserve specific objects from the imminent and inherent dangers of the world. They often have aggressively studded surfaces to further guard them. Within that context, there are also 'Templetop' structures, sometimes in ceramic, sometimes in bronze, that serve a similar 'guarding' function, but the safekeeping of the enclosed object is coming from a different direction, i.e. guarded by spirit. The small lid of a 'stupa' lifts off to reveal a sanctuary within.

Witness

There are structures that I feel have a presence as a 'watcher'. Something or someone whose function is to merely quietly observe. *Silent Witness* and the various manifestations of *Sentinel* have this. The 'function' is to witness and mindfully observe the complex shenanigans of humanity, from our ancient past through to the present times. I would like Sentinels stationed in strategic points around the world, feeding me back updates to how we are progressing as a species.



The Meeting, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
25 x 87 x 26 cm

Dialogue

There are also works that show two figures or creatures opposite each other on a structure, confronting each other, such as *The Meeting*. They often have a zigzag pattern joining them, and they represent the need for dialogue, in a world that often appears to lack that simple facility. The body language of the creatures implies an urgency and a concentrated focus on the subject in hand. Time is of the essence.

The surfaces and textures that I build into my work are part of a process that moves towards making a structure that does not readily reveal the nationality or culture of origin of the maker. Nor does it reveal its age, with its fragments of metals and degraded, pitted surfaces and textures. I am content when a piece of work that I made yesterday could just as well appear to be a thousand years old, made by a civilisation that you can't quite put your finger on. Only I know who they are.

The issues that haunt me, that I try in my own way to deal with, are of a universal nature, common to all humanity, and so they are regardless of time or geography.

Jason Wason



Small Black Structures, 1982
Ceramic
Unique
15.5 x 10 x 10 cm
25 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm
16 x 7.5 x 7.5 cm

right
Dreamscape Vessels, 1982
Ceramic
Unique
52 x 14 x 14 cm
46 x 14 x 14 cm





Raku Vessel, 1989
Ceramic
Unique
18 x 27.5 x 27.5 cm

right
Raku Vessel, 1989
Ceramic
Unique
21 x 26.5 x 26.5 cm



Silent Witness, 2009
(Conflict Series)
Bronze
Edition of 5
165 x 24 x 24 cm





Silver Jar, 2009
Sterling Silver
Edition of 5
15 x 19 x 19.5 cm

right
Guardian Vessel, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
21 x 48 x 48 cm





Devil's Box of Tricks, 2009
Bronze with Sand, Perisphinctes Ammonite and Megalodon Sharks Tooth
Edition of 5
7.5 x 46.5 x 44.5 cm





Devil's Box of Tricks, 2009
Bronze with Sand and Perisphinctes Ammonite
Edition of 5
10 x 45.5 x 38 cm



Sentinel, 2009
Ceramic
Unique
58 x 34 x 19 cm





left
Mother's Bowl, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
30 x 55 x 43 cm

Zig Zag Object, 2010
Bronze and Wooden Box
Edition of 5
72.5 x 11 x 11.5 cm





The Meeting, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 5
25 x 87 x 26 cm

right
Snake Fragment from the Eastern Wall, 2010
Ceramic
Unique
64 x 56 x 4 cm





Handprint, 2010
Ceramic
Unique
50.5 x 50.5 x 7 cm

right
Monumental Red Vessel, 2010
Ceramic
Unique
50 x 46 x 46 cm





top
Zig Zag Dish, 2010
Ceramic
Unique
44.5 x 44.5 x 7 cm

bottom
Black and White
Chequered Dish, 2012
Ceramic
Unique
4 x 50 x 50 cm

right
Zig Zag Dish, 2012
Ceramic
Unique
60.5 x 60.5 x 11 cm





left
Shield, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic
Unique
59 x 59 x 16 cm

top
Shield, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic
Unique
54 x 54 x 8 cm

bottom
Shield, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic
Unique
53 x 53 x 12 cm





Broken Promises, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic
Unique
35 x 75 x 28 cm

right
The Towers, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic and Silk
Unique
70 x 17 x 17 cm
116 x 17 x 17 cm
110 x 17 x 17 cm





left
 Templetop Vessel, 2012
 Ceramic
 Unique
 51 x 40 x 40 cm



top
 Torn Bowl, 2014
 (Conflict Series)
 Ceramic
 Unique
 25 x 43 x 43 cm



bottom
 Gold Vessel, 2016
 Ceramic
 Unique
 27.5 x 43 x 43 cm



left
 Closer to Home, 2015
 Bonded Iron
 Unique
 89 x 9 x 6.5 cm

top
 Yantra, 2016
 Ceramic
 Unique
 5 x 45 x 45 cm

bottom
 Yantra, 2016
 Ceramic
 Unique
 7 x 52 x 52 cm





top
Guarded Bowl, 2016
Ceramic
Unique
21.5 x 43 x 48 cm

bottom
Low Slung Vessel, 2016
Ceramic
Unique
15 x 49 x 49 cm

right
Preservation Vessel, 2016
Ceramic
Unique
54 x 22 x 22 cm





left
 Contained Space, 2018
 (Resolution Series)
 Ceramic
 Unique
 18 x 48 x 48 cm

top
 Contained Space, 2018
 (Resolution Series)
 Ceramic
 Unique
 12 x 55 x 55 cm

bottom
 Contained Space, 2018
 (Resolution Series)
 Ceramic
 Unique
 13 x 47 x 47 cm





top
Ships In The Night, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
7 x 51.5 x 51.5 cm

bottom
Zig Zag Dish, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
4 x 51 x 52 cm

right
Monumental Red
Preservation Vessel, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
55 x 45 x 45 cm





left
Closer to Home, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
97 x 12 x 10 cm

right
Closer to Home, 2018
Ceramic Fired in Bracken
Unique
56.5 x 6 x 9.5 cm
59 x 7 x 10 cm





top
Gold Bowl, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
12 x 48 x 48 cm

bottom
Zig Zag Object, 2018
Ceramic and Slate
Unique
8.5 x 65 x 8 cm

right
Guardian Vessel, 2019
Ceramic
Unique
57 x 23 x 23 cm





Templetop Vessel, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
38 x 45 x 45 cm

right
Guarded Box, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
25 x 57 x 37 cm





left

Red Bowl, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
17 x 50 x 50 cm

Red and Gold Studded Vessel, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
21.5 x 38 x 38.5 cm



top
 Low Slung Vessel, 2020
 Ceramic
 Unique
 18 x 52 x 52 cm

bottom
 The Meeting, 2020
 Ceramic
 Unique
 20 x 36 x 16.5 cm

right
 Lidded Vessel, 2020
 Ceramic
 Unique
 52 x 50 x 50 cm





Invocation, 2020
Ceramic and Cloth
Unique
37.5 x 34 x 1 cm



Invocation, 2020
Ceramic and Cloth
Unique
38.5 x 31 x 1 cm



right
Snake Fragment from the Eastern Wall, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
63 x 56 x 3 cm



top
Black Green and Gold Jar,
2022
Ceramic
Unique
16.5 x 14 x 14 cm

bottom
Small Studded Black and
Gold Vessel, 2022
Ceramic
Unique
12 x 12.5 x 13 cm

top
Small Gold Jar. 2022
Ceramic
Unique
12 x 13 x 13 cm

bottom
Gold Lidded Vessel, 2024
Ceramic
Unique
13.5 x 20 x 20 cm





left
The Devil's Box of Tricks, 2024
Bonded Iron and
Perisphinctes Ammonite
Unique
15.5 x 46 x 39 cm



top
Contained Space, 2014
Ceramic
Unique
11 x 35 x 26 cm



bottom
Studded Red and Gold
Vessel, 2025
Ceramic
Unique
24 x 43 x 48 cm



top
Vessel 2, 2025
(Excavation Series)
Ceramic with Clearwell
Cave Ochre
Unique
16 x 16 x 16 cm

bottom
Vessel 3, 2025
(Excavation Series)
Ceramic with Clearwell
Cave Ochre
Unique
17 x 14 x 14 cm

right
Templetop Vessel, 2025
(Excavation Series)
Ceramic with Clearwell
Cave Ochre
Unique
30 x 40 x 36 cm





left
Lidded Jar with Silk,
c.2023-2025
Ceramic and Silk
Unique
13.5 x 10 x 9.5 cm

top
Lidded Jar with Silk,
c.2023-2025
Ceramic and Silk
Unique
12 x 11 X 10 cm

bottom
Lidded Jar with Silk,
c.2023-2025
Ceramic and Silk
Unique
13 x 10 x 10 cm





Scaled Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
14.5 x 17 x 18 cm

Red and Gold Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
8 x 20.5 x 20.5 cm



Grey and Gold Jar,
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
16.5 x 18 x 18 cm

Black and Gold Bowl,
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
10 x 14.5 x 14.5 cm





Gold Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
19.5 x 11.5 x 11.5 cm



Gold Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
18 x 10.5 x 10.5 cm



Gold Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
16.5 x 10 x 10 cm



Red and Gold Jar c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
17 x 12.5 x 12.5 cm



left
Lidded Vessel, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
16.5 x 20 x 20 cm

top
Scaled Lidded Vessel
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
10.5 x 17 x 17 cm

bottom
Gold and Cream Lidded
Vessel c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
11.5 x 15.5 x 15 cm





Black and Gold Bowl
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
14 x 18 x 18 cm

Red and Gold Bowl
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
8.5 x 22.5 x 22.5 cm



Blue and Gold Bowl
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
6 x 25 x 25 cm

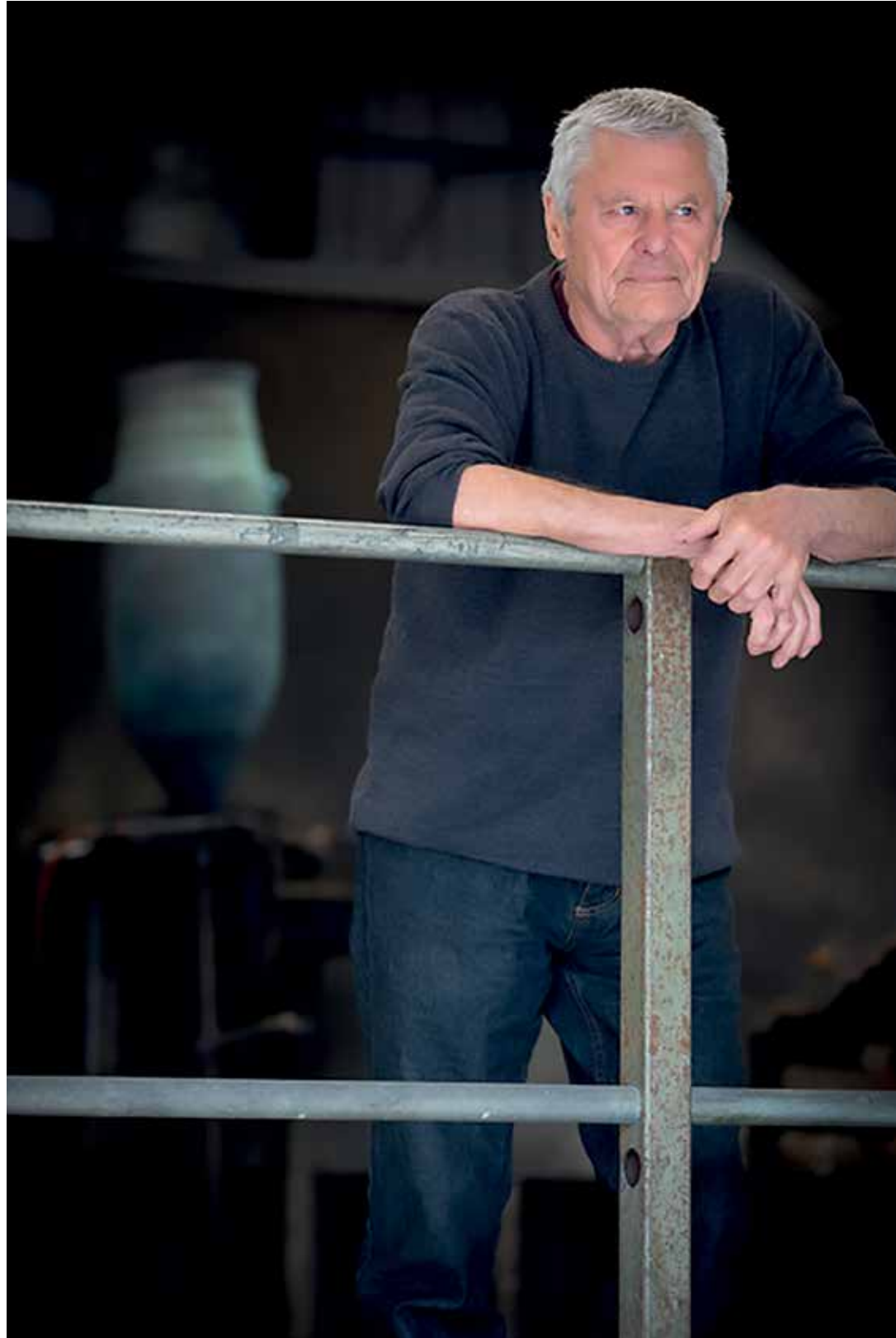
Red and Gold Bowl
c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
9.5 x 21 x 21 cm





Stop Calling Dead Children Collateral Damage You Fuckers, 2026
Ceramic and Shoes
Unique
35.5 x 55 x 55 cm





Jason Wason at
Pangolin Editions, 2026

Afterword

My first encounter with a Jason Wason pot was in the house of Terence Coventry, a fellow maker of forms, who similarly lived in and was influenced by the rugged Cornish landscape he chose to make his home. Where Coventry's sculptures were overtly figurative or based on perceptive animal characterisations, Wason's vessel stood self contained, the slow belly of the pot reined in by sharp edges, and unapologetically abstract. Quiet, but commanding in presence, I couldn't take my eyes off it. The vessel was adorned with a reptilian skin of scales that wrapped the generous body. Its foot tapered sharply to engage with the table surface, while the neck of the full body enfolded in on itself, secretly hiding the pregnant shadowy interior, like a python protecting its eggs.



detail
Scaled Jar, c.2023-2025
Ceramic
Unique
14.5 x 17 x 18 cm



Silver Jar, 2009
Sterling Silver
Edition of 5
15 x 19 x 19.5 cm

My fascination with Wason's pot was twofold; firstly I was seduced, certainly, by the formal competence, the appropriate and minimal scaled embellishment and the contrast of form, line, and texture and equally by a sense of real individuality. Here, it seemed to me, was a voice of uniqueness in a field where all too often, in others' hands, the clay slipped through fingers, with sensual joy, but perhaps little else. In Wason's pot, there was a narrative I was anxious to explore within the robust structure that spoke sculpturally more than as a pot.

Coventry arranged a meeting for us, and in Wason's workshop, I discovered with delight a richness my first encounter had suggested that I might.

On the shelves and in boxes lay a treasure trove of form and colour, texture and shape, flat and round. Outside In his spoil heap of shattered shards, (Wason is strict with himself, shooting any vessel that ends up not meeting his highest standards) lay fragments of stories, tales of history, places, journeys. Metal oxides burnt into the clay gave earthy elemental colour to a crazy jigsaw that in their fragmentation suggested the deftness of their maker: the spun extensions of a fingerprint, the scratched scraffito of a tool through drying grogged clay, a part of a pattern painted or engraved into its surface. This archeological potter's midden helped me understand the full forms and sculptures Wason explores and practises daily, his expressions of material and form. The full range Wason creates are wonderfully diverse. It seemed to me that in limiting his choice of material and only a few methods of construction, Wason creates



detail
Monumental Red
Preservation Vessel, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
55 x 45 x 45 cm

the basic grammar of his language. And around that structure could then express himself with poetic clarity.

Wason instinctively understands clay. The liquidity of its most plastic state, spinning the layered flat silicate particles that form clay into a multitude of walled vessels. The clay, as it dries out, presents new opportunities to affect its nature. Smooth coils can be pared off to alter form and surface. Drier even, the material body can be scratched over or into, abraded or rubbed. Further alteration can be modelled on, or pierced through, and metal oxides can be fired multiple times to become a metal clay amalgam.

Many of Wason's vessels are reminiscent of previous ages, though not specific to time or place. They hold a nostalgic recognition, a timelessness, while remaining resolutely contemporary. This connection to the past is something that I related to immediately, as I too work in a process that has ancient roots. Indeed, my craft of bronze casting could not have been invented had the technology of ceramics and firing not preceded it. And this draws yet other connections. Pottery, humankind's second technology after stone flints and tools, was a huge leap in our ancestors' toolkit and thinking processes. The ability to manipulate clay and fire led inevitably to the later technology of lost wax casting, using the same fire and clay abilities to melt and form metal sculpture through moulds and crucibles of the same clay and employing the same kilns that made ceramics.

Wason's obvious sense for ancient technology meant that the step towards exploring bronze and metal forms was a natural extension of concept and material. We have enjoyed a fruitful collaboration of our two technologies that has imparted new associations and stories to those that Wason's enigmatic and exquisite forms suggest.

The wonder and sensuality of Wason's vessel-like sculptures are all the more shocking when he employs implicit narrative, as in his "conflict" series. Sensuous volumes pierced and torn, emotive relics placed within or vessels heavy with bomb or missile like associations, reflect the parallel uses of technology and vessels. They can contain dynamite and explode, or they can contain ideas. As with all material progression, they can be put to constructive or destructive ends.



Broken Promises, 2012
(Conflict Series)
Ceramic
Unique
35 x 75 x 28 cm

Silent Witness, 2009
(Conflict Series)
Bronze
Edition of 5
165 x 24 x 24 cm



Visually and haptically, Wason's vessels are primarily objects of standalone contemplative beauty. Moreover, allowing our minds to wonder across his scored, impressed, burnt, and modelled surfaces and volumes, takes us on journeys, ancient and modern, in our minds. Red dust, rock and stone, primal influences are alluded to with shape and surface, strange encounters with animal beings, the warm embrace of maternal comfort, tassels and handprints, handles and armour, engage with our memory and associations, whilst pattern and colour give familiar repetition to our random thoughts.

In Wason's 80 years, a lifetime of skill and thought are incorporated into objects that break ceramic boundaries, in what, for me, are the apogee of contemporary ceramic art. The examples I live with bring me joy and send me on new virtual journeys each time I contemplate or feel them.

Rungwe Kingdon



Jason Wason		2009	In The Mix, Pangolin London
		2008	Sterling Stuff II, Pangolin London
		2008	Jason Wason Ceramics, Lemon Street Gallery
		2008	Gallery St Ives, Tokyo, Japan
		2007	Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
		2007	The Circle is Unbroken, Lemon Street Gallery, Truro
		2006	Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
		2005	Kusakabe Folk Museum : Gifu, Japan
		2005	Solo exhibition Maruzen Department Store : Nagoya, Japan
		2005	Seto City Art Museum : Japan
		2004	Collect : Victoria & Albert Museum, London
		2004	Jason Wason Ceramics : Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
		2003	Body and Form : Joanna Bird Gallery, London
		2003	Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
		2002	Gallery Bizan : Seto Shi, Aichi, Japan
		2002	Ceramica International, Penlee Museum, Penzance, Cornwall
		2002	Potters from the Treasure House : Jason Wason, Yasuo Terada, Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
		2002	Seto City Cultural Centre : Aichi Prefecture, Japan
		2002	SOFA : Sculptural Objects and Functional Art : Chicago, USA
		2001	British Studio Ceramics Works from the New Millenium : The Clay Studio Gallery, Philadephia, USA
		2001	SOFA: Sculptural Objects and Functional Art : Chicago, USA
		2001	Japanese Connections : Seto Glass and Ceramic centre, Japan
		2000	6 Chapel Row Gallery : Bath
		2000	Seto studio Japan : Worked for two months with Yasuo Terada at Seto
		2000	Japanese Connections : C Square Gallery, Nagoya, Japan
		2000	Jason Wason, David Leach, Shinsaka Hamada and Tatsuzo Shimaoka : Dartington Hall, Devon
		1999	Austin Desmond Fine Art : London
		1999	Cobra and Bellamy : Chelsea, London
		1998	Running Ridge Gallery : Sante Fe, New Mexico, USA
		1998	Austin Desmond Fine Art : London
		1997	Six Chapel Row : Bath
		1997	Joanna Bird Gallery : Including Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Michael Cardew, Tatsuzo Shimaoko, Lucy Rie
		1996	Playing with Fire : Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
		1995	Ten Pieces : Tate Gallery St Ives, Cornwall
		1995	Japanese Connections : Touring Show
		1995	Gallery Gilbert, Dorchester
		1995	Gallerie Inart : Amsterdam, Holland
1946	Born, Liverpool		
1964-1974	Travelled Europe, North Africa, Middle East and Asia		
1974-1976	Set up Crafts community in Dumfrieshire, built a kick wheel from the back wheel and half shaft of a Morris 1000 van, and learnt to throw		
1976-1981	Leach Pottery, St. Ives, Cornwall		
1981-present	Works in own studio near St. Just, Cornwall		
Solo and Group Exhibitions			
2025	Back To The Cave – The Full Spectrum, a major exhibition of sculpture, deep underground in the Clearwell Caves, Forest of Dean, Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire		
2024	The Stockroom, Gallery Pangolin		
2023	Public Hanging, Withiel House, Lemon Street Gallery		
2022	Back to the Cave. A major exhibition of sculpture, deep underground in the Clearwell Caves, Forest of Dean, Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire		
2021	Acquisition and Installation of J.W. work in Gallery 141, Contemporary Ceramics Collection, V&A Museum		
2021	Making Waves, The Hundred Year Legacy of Bernard Leach, St Ives Ceramics		
2019	A View from the Edge, Lemon Street Gallery		
2019	Re Formation, Bishop's Palace, Wells Cathedral		
2019	Collect International Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery London		
2018	Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool Museum		
2018	The Reunion, Leach Pottery, St Ives, Cornwall		
2017	Summer of Love, 50 years on, Gallery Pangolin		
2017	The Ark, Chester Cathedral, Gallery Pangolin		
2017	Playing with Fire III, Jason Wason and Yasuo Terada, Lemon Street Gallery		
2016	Inside Out, Lemon Street Gallery		
2014	Crucible 2, Gloucester Cathedral, Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire		
2014	Silent Witness, Lemon Street Gallery		
2012	All Fired Up, Lemon Street Gallery		
2011	Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, Tochigi, Japan		
2010	A Devil's Box of Tricks, Lemon Street Gallery		
2010	Burnt Offerings, Pangolin London		
2010	Contemporary British Ceramics, Mint Museum, North Carolina USA		
2009	Keio Department Store: Tokyo, Japan		

1995	Boymans Van Beuningen Museum : Rotterdam, Holland
1995	Vincent Gallery : Exeter
1994	Raku Exhibition : Tate Gallery St.Ives, Cornwall
1994	Andrew Usiskin Gallery : London
1993	Excavation Series : Austin Desmond Fine Art : London
1992	Maruzen Department Store : Tokyo, Japan
1990	Playing with Fire : Austin Desmond Fine Art, London
1990	National Museum and Gallery : Liverpool
1989	Ceramics, Austin/Desmond Fine Art

Public Collections

2008	Mashiko Museum of Ceramic Art, Japan.
2006	Permanent collection Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro, Cornwall
2008	Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Mino, Tajimi, Gifu Prefecture, Japan
2003	Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool Museum.
2002	Permanent collection at Togeï Messe, Mashiko, Japan
2002	Permanent display at Bizan Tobo, Seto Shi, Aichi Prefecture, Japan
1995	Boymans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, Holland.

Prizes and Awards

2005	South West Arts Council grant for residency to Seihoji Ancient Kiln Park Festival, Seto, Japan
1998	South West Arts Council Grant to travel and study ceramics in New Mexico
1997	Funded by British Council to do lecture tour throughout Israel, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem
1992	Installation for British High Commission, Dhaka, Bangladesh
1990	South West Arts Council Development Award to open European Connections



previous pages:
Low Slung Vessel, 2020
Ceramic
Unique
18 x 52 x 52 cm

Jason Wason at Pangolin Editions, 2026

Monumental Red
Preservation Vessel, 2018
Ceramic
Unique
55 x 45 x 45 cm

cover:
detail Low Slung Vessel, 2016
Ceramic
Unique
15 x 49 x 49 cm

Measurements are height x width x depth

Gallery Pangolin would like to thank Jason Wason for his invaluable contribution in bringing this retrospective together, Michael Bird for his illuminating introduction and Steve Russell for the excellent photography.

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