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POB

PETA O'BRIEN

ADAPT or PERISH

10 – 26 NOVEMBER, 2022



## A D A P T or P E R I S H POB

Over recent years, ceramics has enjoyed a notable renaissance. A primal medium with story-telling properties, clay is one of our earliest recorded examples of personal expression. In a world now characterised by mass production and disposable culture, it is unsurprising that we find ourselves searching for beauty and authenticity. Clay, as an artisanal medium, fulfils our desire for the unique and our appreciation of objects made by hand. We are naturally enamoured by works that reflect the marks of the maker.


Peta O'Brien's (aka POB) exhibition, A D A P T or P E R I S H, is the multi-disciplinary artist's second exhibition in Australia, and the first dedicated solely to ceramics. It is a deeply personal body of work—an emotional response to a recent transitional period in her life. POB left Melbourne for London in 1985 to pursue a career in food styling while continuing to work in the visual arts as a photographer and ceramicist. Splitting her time between London and Melbourne over the years, POB has had to alter her rhythm to navigate dramatically changed circumstances. She has learned to yield to forces beyond her control: adapt or perish. Carrying this philosophy into her ceramics has been a liberating experience for the artist, whose attention to detail in her other artistic pursuits has been resolute. She has surrendered to the elemental process of creating her hand-built ceramics, relinquishing all sense of perfectionism and the absolute.

While physically demanding at times, there is an undeniably meditative quality to the making of ceramics. For POB, the act of creation becomes ritualistic—a compulsive practice that occupies her into the early hours of the morning. Working with stoneware clay in a variety of earthy hues, POB employs coiling, pinching and slab building methods to create her vessels. The natural imperfections in the artist's hand-built works offer an array of perspectives from any given angle. Her biomorphic ceramics sit at the intersection of abstraction and figuration—their curvaceous torsos and swollen bellies exuding a mystical sensuality reminiscent of the female form. The artist's stories spill from the lips of her vessels and beckon us to lean in.

With a particular interest in texture, POB fashions the finishes of her works to alter the way in which we interact with each piece. We are drawn to the dimpled surfaces of some silhouettes, while tools and found objects are used to intricately engrave the surfaces of others. When the works enter the kiln, an aspect of chance comes into play and the artist must trust in the alchemic process.

In creating this breakthrough body of work, POB has explored the expressive potential of her medium and, in doing so, has reinvigorated our love of the handmade. By appreciating the vagaries of the ceramic process, the artist invites us to seek comfort in uncertainty and allow things to unfold organically. In the same way that once malleable clay becomes robust after firing, POB reminds us that, in times of change, we must adapt our mindset in order to emerge resilient.

Nicole Hauser  
November 2022





# ADAPT or PERISH

Stoneware works  
2019 – 2022



*DIMPLE 1 - 14*

Various sizes : largest 8(H) x 6.5(W)cm

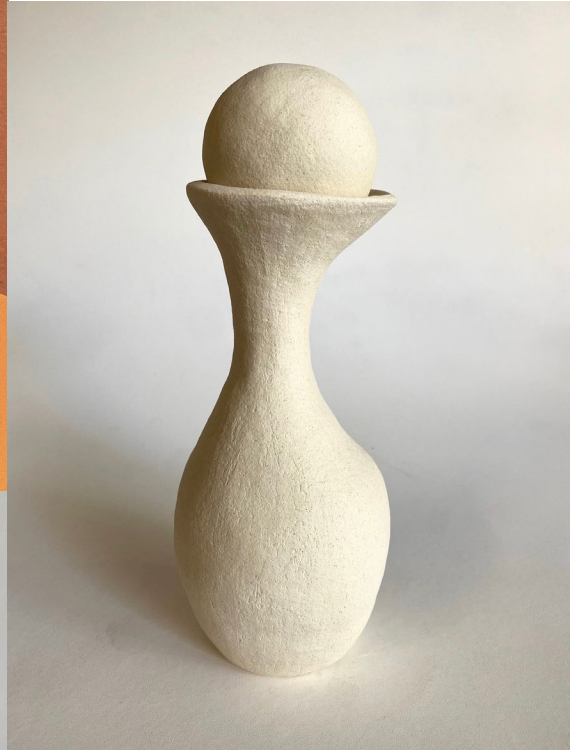




*STIPPLE 1 - 3*

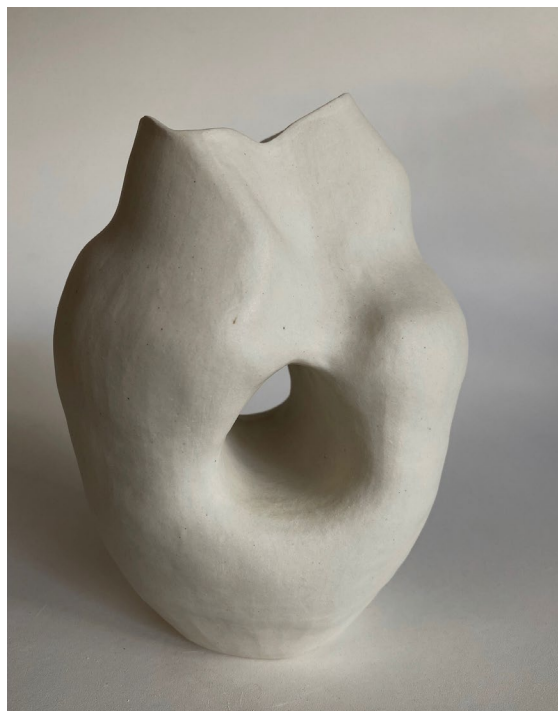
Stipple 1 (top): 33(H) x 22(W) x 20(D)cm  
Stipple 2 (middle): 42(H) x 21(W) x 18(D)cm  
Stipple 3 (left): 15.5(H) x 10(W)cm





*BELLY 1 - 3*

Belly 1 (top): 28(H) x 15(W)cm  
Belly 2 (middle): 27.5(H) x 10.5(W)cm  
Belly 3 (left): 26(H) x 15.5(W)cm



#### CELO 1 - 4

Celo 1 (top LHS): 27(H) x 23(W) x 12(D)cm  
 Celo 2 (top RHS): 24(H) x 17(W) x 14(D)cm  
 Celo 3 (bottom LHS): 27(H) x 23(W) x 12(D)cm  
 Celo 4 (bottom RHS): 27(H) x 23(W) x 12(D)cm







#### VESSEL 1 - 4

Vessel 1 (top LHS): 24(H) x 12(W)cm  
 Vessel 2 (top RHS): 15.5(H) x 11.5(W)cm  
 Vessel 3 (bottom LHS): 12(H) x 8(W)cm  
 Vessel 4 (bottom RHS): 35(H) x 10(W)cm



# VESSEL 5 - 6

Vessel 5 (top): 15(H) x 8(W)cm  
Vessel 6 (left): 21.5(H) x 8(W)cm





*VESSEL 8 -10  
VERTEBRAE 1*

Vessel 8 (top ): 31(H) x 15(W)cm  
 Vertebrae 1 (top right): 6(H) x 8(W)cm  
 Vessel 9 (above): 20(H) x 5.5(W)cm  
 Vessel 10 (left): 15.5 x 9cm



### *UNDULATION 1 - 3*

Undulation 1 w hole (top): 29(H) x 19(W) x 11(D)cm  
 Undulation 2 w hole (middle): 31(H) x 14(W) x 13(D)cm  
 Undulation 3 (left): 25(H) x 7(W)cm





*TOTEM 1 - 3*

Totem 1 (top): 38(H) x 15(W)cm  
Totem 2 (middle): 32(H) x 8(W)cm  
Totem 3 (left): 25(H) x 9(W)cm





# TOTEM 4 - 5

Vertebrae 3 (top): 6.5(H) x 8(W)cm  
 Totem 5 (above): 17(H) x 13(W)cm  
 Totem 4 (left): 43(H) x 12(W)cm





*EMBRACE, VERTIBRAE  
+ DOUBLE DIMPLE*

Embrace (top left): 12(H) x 12(W)cm  
Vertibrae 2 (top right): 6(H) x 10(W)cm  
Double dimple (left): 18(H) x 10(W)cm



*COPIA 1 - 2*

Copia 1 (top): 28.5(H) x 23(W)cm  
Copia 2 (bottom): 29(H) x 24(W)cm







*FINN 1 + 2*

Finn 1 (top): 16(H) x 9(W)cm  
Finn 2 (left): 16(H) x 12(W)cm











# **PETA O'BRIEN**

## **Artist's CV**



## **ADAPT or PERISH**

10 – 26 November, 2022

N\H PROJECT SPACE

### **Opening Drinks**

Thursday 10 November, 6–8pm

12-14 Meagher Street  
Chippendale \ Sydney

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