

Inventing the Rest: New Adventures in Clay

Opening Reception: Thursday 29 June 2023, 6 – 8pm

Exhibition Dates: 29 June – 12 August 2023

Maximillian William, London is pleased to present *Inventing the Rest: New Adventures in Clay*, an exhibition of new works by Adebunmi Gbadebo, Anina Major and Andrés Monzón-Aguirre. Through ceramic sculpture, each artist transforms everyday objects and gestures, thereby expressing the particularities of their time, place and personhood.

This exhibition will be the latest in a series of presentations the gallery has curated centred on the cultural and formal significances of clay. The group exhibition, *Embodying Anew*, opened in May 2021, with the work of Simone Leigh, Magdalene Odundo OBE, and Thaddeus Mosley. In July 2022, *A Passion for Form* featured a selection of works from the collection of Dr Brian Harding including work by Magdalene Odundo OBE, Jennifer Lee OBE, Hans Coper, and Peter Collingwood OBE.

Some of the earliest signs of humanity's existence are pottery shards; changing raw clay into a fixed state by baking it at a high temperature is among the most ancient of our species' inventions. Once thus transformed, clay is unchanging: a phenomenon that has allowed it to act as a vessel for cultural transmission across continents and millennia. This potential finds new expression in the works featured in *Inventing the Rest: New Adventures in Clay*. This exhibition takes its title, from a quote by Andrés Monzón-Aguirre, during the [dialogue](#) between themselves and Major, in response to *A Passion for Form* (2022). Monzón-Aguirre refers to artefacts as fragments from which the artist invents their own story. This show presents works, that draw on a rich cultural inheritance yet, stake their own claim for the place of present-day artefacts in the historical record.

Each artist draws from culturally-specific actions and items to create sculptures that reinterpret everything from market stalls to archaeological finds. When Major weaves a sculpture from flat strips of clay, the Bahamian artist is drawing inspiration from the island's plaited straw-work baskets and trinkets, made by locals – including her own family members – largely for the tourist trade; similarly, the artist's rounded sculptural forms draw from the beachfront vernacular of floaties and beachballs. Though the results are often 'imperfect' – works from her *Woven Series* sag, riven with often-ragged holes – the position of her source materials is transformed. By reimagining everyday items, the artist bestows status and permanence on the informal and the impermanent.

Adebunmi Gbadebo moves beyond the depiction of non-ceramic media towards their literal use, in combination with clay. Animal bones found in the True Blue Cemetery, South Carolina, sprout from the surface of vessels by the US artist. These wood- or pit-fired forms are coiled from red clay hand-dug in True Blue, a former plantation in Fort Motte, South Carolina; ancestors from Gbadebo's maternal line were enslaved to work that very same soil, and some lie buried in its cemetery. To work with this earth – against a history of forced migration and labour – is to restate the connection between body and land on the artist's own terms.

The question of roots is alive, too, in the work of Colombian-born artist Andrés Monzón-Aguirre, who draws from Latin American history and popular culture. Their *Bodegón* series of glazed earthenware sculptures takes its name from the 17th-century Spanish tradition of still life painting; here they elevate locally ubiquitous foods such as citrus fruit or cocoa pods into pyramidal structures, which draw equally from ancient Andean metalwork and the quotidian practise of stacking provisions for market. Synthesising centuries of cultural (ex)changes and Indigenous displacements, Monzón-Aguirre – like each artist featured in *Inventing the Rest: New Adventures in Clay* arrives at a new point of hybridity.

Notes to Editors:

This exhibition marks the debut presentation of Major and Monzón-Aguirre's work in the UK.

Anina Major (b. 1981, the Bahamas) (she/her) is a visual artist based in New York. She holds an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design. Previous solo exhibitions include *Anina Major: Inheritance*, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Los Angeles (2022) and Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center (2020). Group shows include *Underneath Everything: Humility and Grandeur in Contemporary Ceramics*, Des Moines Art Center, Iowa (2023), *Making History: Recent Acquisitions*, Fuller Craft Museum, Massachusetts (2022), *Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, MASS MoCA, Massachusetts (2021), GAA Gallery, Massachusetts (2020) and *Currency*, BAIT15, Abu Dhabi (2020). She is the recipient of numerous awards and residencies, including the Socrates Sculpture Park Fellowship and serving as a mentor for the Saint Heron Ceramics Residency Program. Major's work is featured public collections including, the National Gallery of The Bahamas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) the Rhode Island School of Design Museum and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Andrés Monzón-Aguirre (b, 1987, Colombia) (they/them) is a visual artist based between Medellín and New York. They received their BFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in 2019. Previous solo shows include STARS, Los Angeles (2023), *Bodegón*, Jeffrey Stark, New York, (2021), *Here Beyond*, Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, New York (2019). Group shows include, *Ocultismo y Barro*, Miriam, New York (2022), *TIERRA*, Villegas Editores, Bogotá (2021), *Figurative Works from the Master of Fine Arts Collection*, Alfred Ceramic Art Museum (2020), *Trestle Draw*, NCECA, Pennsylvania, (2018), *Heartists*, Colombo Americano, Medellín, (2016) and *Rescuing Ceramic Heritage*, Centro Colombo Americano, Medellín (2015). They have received awards by the Prince Claus Fund (2013) and the city of Medellín (2014-2016), the International Academy of Ceramics, (2019-22) and has exhibited internationally in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Adebunmi Gbadebo (b.1992, New Jersey) (she/her) is a multimedia artist based between Newark and Philadelphia. She earned her BFA at the School of Visual Arts, NY. Previous solo shows include *Remains*, Claire Oliver Gallery, New York (2023), *Uprooted*, New Jersey City University (2020), *Connected by a Strand*, Therese A Maloney Gallery, New Jersey (2019) and *The Ade Series*, Paul Roberson Gallery, New Jersey (2016). Group shows include *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, (2022); *Salt to Catch Ghost*, Slash Art Gallery, (2022), *Substance*, Pace University Art Gallery, (2021) and *Mapping Black Identities*, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, (2020). Her work is held in public collections including the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Newark Museum of Art. In 2023, she was the recipient of the Maxwell/Hanrahan Award in Craft.

Maximillian William, London began with an itinerant model which allowed the gallery to gradually form a roster of contemporary artists. An impulse to expand alongside the advancing careers of these artists led to the establishment of a permanent gallery space in Fitzrovia in 2019. The gallery is artist-centric, collaborating closely with those it supports to build their platforms. On occasion, the gallery seeks to produce exhibitions that highlight those who have influenced its creative community, with the aim of presenting pivotal figures to a new generation. Alongside exhibition making, the gallery is committed to publishing, producing a range of publications from artist books to exhibition catalogues and monographs. The distribution of literature is key to the gallery's commitment to improving accessibility to contemporary art. Publications by the gallery are held in the archives of MoMA and Tate.

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