



Spade form

Hans Coper

Not on display

Title/Description: Spade form

Artist/Maker: Hans Coper

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Ceramic, Stoneware

Measurements: h 19.3 x w 11.5 x d 5.4 cm

Accession Number: L33

Historic Period: Late 1960s

Production Place: Britain, England

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This late form by the potter Hans Coper is compelling. It stands without a title and without a use. It seems to be completely contemporary, an abstracted study of how to bring an ellipse and a circular drum together to create a vessel where the profile and the volume are difficult to read, uneasy. It seems to be completely archaic, a form that echoes a body, a scarified surface that is close to the abraded skin of buried bronze. It hovers near the totemic, more bone than fired clay.

Coper expressed his belief in the complete contemporaneity of his occupation as a potter. In his only published text he chose to bring two iconic figures of the time, a sculptor and an engineer, into connection with a description of an archaic pot:

A pre-dynastic Egyptian pot, roughly egg-shaped, the size of my hand: made thousands of years ago, possibly by a slave, it has survived in more than one sense. A humble, passive, somehow absurd object - yet potent, mysterious, sensuous. It conveys no comment, no self-expression, but seems to contain and reflect its maker and the human world it inhabits, to contribute its minute quantum of energy - and homage. An object of complete economy made by MAN; Giacometti man; Buckminster Fuller man. A constant. This is the only pot which has really fascinated me. It was not the cause of my making pots, but it gave me a glimpse of what man is.

This is an object of 'complete economy'.

—

Edmund De Waal, artist and writer
