



Vase

Julian Stair

Not on display**Title/Description:** Vase**Artist/Maker:** Julian Stair**Born:** 1983**Object Type:** Vase**Materials:** Ceramic, Porcelain**Technique:** Throwing**Measurements:** h 24.4 x w 15.5 x d 15.3 cm**Accession Number:** P.058**Production Place:** Britain, England, Europe**School/Style:** Studio Ceramics**Copyright:** © Julian Stair**Credit Line:** Bequeathed by Lady Sainsbury, 2014

The beautiful proportions and simple elegance of form are immediately striking in Julian Stair's porcelain vase. Reminiscent of an ancient amphora in its general shape, the accentuated wide lip and neck of the vessel merge into the swollen body, tapering to a narrow foot. We are aware of a sense of volume and balance.

The partnership of form and decoration is intriguing. The artist's use of inlay in a series of diagonal blue glazed lines within horizontal bands lends a gentle sweeping movement around the body of the vase. At the neck of the vessel, these decorative lines energetically break away in an opposing course, activating a sudden change of energy and direction of movement across the gentle form.

Julian Stair is one of the UK's leading ceramic artists, creating works of art on both a monumental and intimate scale. Stair has become a leading historian of English Studio Ceramics, completing a PhD at the Royal College of Art, researching the critical origins of English Studio Pottery.

After completing a degree in ceramics at Camberwell School of Art in 1978, Stair continued his studies at the Royal College of Art, London, graduating in 1981. Lady Sainsbury began to collect his work from this period, inviting Stair to the Sainsburys' home in Smith Square, London, where he encountered their outstanding personal collection of art, including Tang figures, paintings by Francis Bacon and works by Hans Coper and Lucie Rie. The Sainsburys went on to help finance the set-up of his first studio in Brixton, London, with fellow ceramicist Sara Radstone, and continued to support his work. [1]

The artist describes Lady Sainsbury as an intuitive collector: 'She responded visually to materials, rather than ideas. They weren't collecting for the sake of fashion, they bought what they genuinely liked - it was about the object itself...this is why their collection has a great strength to it and continuity, an identity, an independent stance.' Stair expresses, 'The Sainsburys were fantastically important to me and other potters. There was a great generosity about them, not just through their financial support to artists, but in their spirit.' [2]

Katharine Malcolm, June 2020

[1] Cyril Frankel and James Austin, *Modern Pots* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2000), pp.156-157.

[2] Interview with the artist, phone call 19/06/20

Further Reading

Frankel, Cyril, and James Austin, *Modern Pots* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2000)

Jones, Jeffrey, *Studio Pottery In Britain 1900-2005* (London: A & C Black, 2007)

Watson, Oliver, *Studio Pottery* (London: Phaidon, in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1993)

<http://www.julianstair.com/>

John M. Anderson Endowed Lecture Series: 'A Sense of Place', The Pennsylvania State University, 18 February 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTyzNba2KL4>
