



# Standing form

Tony Hepburn

---

## Not on display

**Title/Description:** Standing form

**Artist/Maker:** Tony Hepburn (Artist)

**Born:** 1975

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Ceramic, Stoneware

**Technique:** Handbuilding

**Measurements:** h. 510mm

**Accession Number:** 50749

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** Britain, England

**Credit Line:** Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by HM Government from Leslie Birks Hay and allocated to SCVA, 2016

---

Tony Hepburn is 'a sculptor in clay whose work lies outside all ceramic traditions'. [1] Here **Hepburn exhausts the materiality of clay - it appears heavy, metallic, flexible and delicate. The sculpture has an industrial visual language. The extruded bent clay rods have the appearance of pipework and are joined to a slab-built brick form. Hepburn had worked in a brick factory and this example of his early work explores and manipulates this ubiquitous ceramic object.**

In the early 1960s, Hepburn studied at Camberwell College of Art where he was taught by Lucie Rie and Hans Coper. He had initially studied painting but pursued clay because it freed him from representation, he says, 'making a pot was the first abstract decision I had made in my life'. [2] Hepburn's work has always challenged the expectations of ceramics practice. It has constantly shifted visually and stylistically, encompassing sculpture, installation, performance and the fields of conceptual art and architecture.

There is a rapport between Hepburn's early works in the Sainsbury Centre Collection (see also 50748 and 50747) and those of American sculptural ceramicists working in the 1960s, including Ron Nagle and Ken Price. This affinity was recognised when he was invited to teach in the USA in the

late 1960s. By the mid-1970s Hepburn had moved to the USA permanently. Here he continued to make radical ceramic work and became an important and influential ceramics teacher at Alfred University, New York and the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan.

Sim Panaser, June 2020

[1] Tony Birks, *Art of the Modern Potter*, (London: Country Life Books, 1976), p. 9.

[2] Cranbrook Schools, *Renowned Ceramics Artist Visits Upper School*, 2008, <https://schools.cranbrook.edu/news-detail?pk=435392> [accessed 12/05/20].

---

---

## Further Reading

Birks, Tony, 'Anthony Hepburn: Young British Potter', *Craft Horizons*, 29 (July 1969), 34-36

Birks, Tony, *Art of the Modern Potter* (London: Country Life Books, 1976)

Cranbrook Schools, *Renowned Ceramics Artist Visits Upper School* (2008)  
<https://schools.cranbrook.edu/news-detail?pk=435392> [accessed 12 May 2020]

Selection of essays on the work of Tony Hepburn, *Detroit Research*, Volume 2 (2015),  
<https://www.detroitresearch.org/volume2/> [accessed 20 June 2020]

---

---