



# Turquoise Pot with Red Lines

Alison Britton

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Turquoise Pot with Red Lines

**Artist/Maker:** Alison Britton (Artist)

**Born:** 1991 - 1991

**Object Type:** Vase, Vessel

**Materials:** Ceramic, Earthenware

**Technique:** Slab-built

**Measurements:** h. 360 x w. 380 x d. 230 mm

**Accession Number:** 50859

**Credit Line:** Donated by Alison Britton

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Alison Britton OBE (b.1948) is one of the UK's leading ceramic artists and writers on ceramics. She was part of a group of radical artists graduating from the Royal College of Art in the late 1970s who wanted to re-establish the 'vessel' as an abstract form, taking inspiration from Gordon Baldwin (b.1932) and Hans Coper (1920-1981). They moved away from the Leach school of Anglo-East Asian ceramics towards a more modernist aesthetic.

*Turquoise Pot with Red Lines* is a slab-built earthenware form with a generous convex spout. This addition adds a dramatic bulge to the silhouette of the vessel that challenges the viewer's preconceptions of what constitutes a well-balanced functional pot. This jug-like vessel is decorated with pale blue and reddish-purple slip that has been applied in a loose painterly manner. The signature and date of the vessel are inscribed on the base. Once part of the Ed Wolf Collection, *Turquoise Pot with Red Lines* was returned to Alison Britton after his collection was dispersed.

Britton explores the vessel as a form and its relationship to function. Her works have a loose connection to function in that they are containers, but often the size, lack of handles, or double spouts renders use in the traditional sense impossible. The surface is treated as a three-dimensional canvas with decoration applied in an abstract and painterly manner, with a limited palette of pigments.

When describing the difference between traditional and modern ceramic forms, Britton made the observation that:

'the consistent silhouette of the round upright and shiny traditional pot has been interrupted - pots are demanding to be approached from different viewpoints because of asymmetry or flattening or complex multiple forms...' [1]

This holds true for *Turquoise Pot with Red Lines*, which gradually reveals itself when observed from multiple viewpoints - appearing lobed from one angle and surprisingly flat from another.

This work is representative of Britton's oeuvre, in which she deconstructs or disassembles the vessel and reinvents its form, animating the dynamic lines of her abstracted vessels with the addition of gestural mark making. Her lively brushwork has led to comparisons with the painters Stephen Buckley (b.1944), Howard Hodgkin (1932-2017) and Sean Scully (b.1945). [2]

Britton was awarded an OBE in 1990 in recognition of her services to the applied arts, and she is a senior tutor at the Royal College of Art.

[1] Britton quoted in Peter Dormer, *The New Ceramics: Trends and Traditions* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p.8.

[2] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p.453.

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## **Further Reading**

Britton, Alison, *The Work of Alison Britton. Catalogue of Exhibition* (London: Crafts Council, 1979)

Britton, Alison *Seeing Things: Collected Writing on Art, Craft and Design. Occasional Papers* (London: 2014)

Dormer, Peter and David Cripps, *Alison Britton in Studio*(London: Bellew Publishing, 1985)

Dormer, Peter, *The New Ceramics: Trends and Traditions* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986)

Greenhalgh, Paul, *Ceramic, Art and Civilisation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

Britton, Alison and Tanya Harrod, *Alison Britton, Ceramics in Studio* (London: Bellew Publishing, 1990)

Sandino, Linda, *Complexity and ambiguity: the ceramics of Alison Britton* (London: 2000)

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