

AVITAL SHEFFER



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INTIMATE DISTANCE

STEPHANIE HOPPEN GALLERY

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Avital Sheffer has established an international reputation for her immaculate, graceful vessels. Generous in form and eloquent in expression, they could be ancient artefacts, recently uncovered but perfectly preserved. These works are entirely contemporary, however. It is the qualities inherent in the materials, combined with Sheffer's exceptional skill in manipulating them that results in this brilliant deception.

She hand-builds her pots, using the coil method, building up the curved shapes freely but with astonishing assurance. The perfect symmetry is then enhanced or, sometimes, slightly disturbed, by the addition of dissecting lines in low relief, which create more spaces and shapes within the form. Her new work takes the curvilinear, arching forms, familiar in earlier work, and adds additional reach. Her forms have acquired a fluid, almost dancing quality, brought about by the asymmetric balance and accented by surface ornament. This is particularly noticeable in *Lekitos VI* where the swirling arabesques of the pattern, punctuated with flickers of red, appear to push against the raised lines traced across the form, further emphasising the sense of movement.

After the pots have been built and fired once they are glazed and printed, building up the layers through multiple firings. The patterns and texts are sourced from museums and libraries, their image transferred to silk screens for printing. The colours are oxides, mixed to Sheffer's own recipe, and combined with a medium to the right consistency for the fired ceramic surface. The printing itself is done on to potter's tissue and transferred to the glazed surface of the vessel before a final firing. This precise, cerebral process requires care - mistakes are not easily corrected - and is in sharp contrast to the more intuitive, physical nature of the construction process.

In her 2015 exhibition, the bottle form features strongly, suggesting imminent relief from the sense of thirst generated by the dry, sanded, fired clay surface. Sheffer's pots have the qualities of desert stone, or the salt-laden sails of abandoned boats. They bear witness - or appear to - to the passage of time and the ceaseless movement of peoples across time and continents. Culture migrates: it travels with people in the form of skills and knowledge. Consequently, similar patterns and forms are found in places far apart, a process that is reflected in the design of Sheffer's vessels.

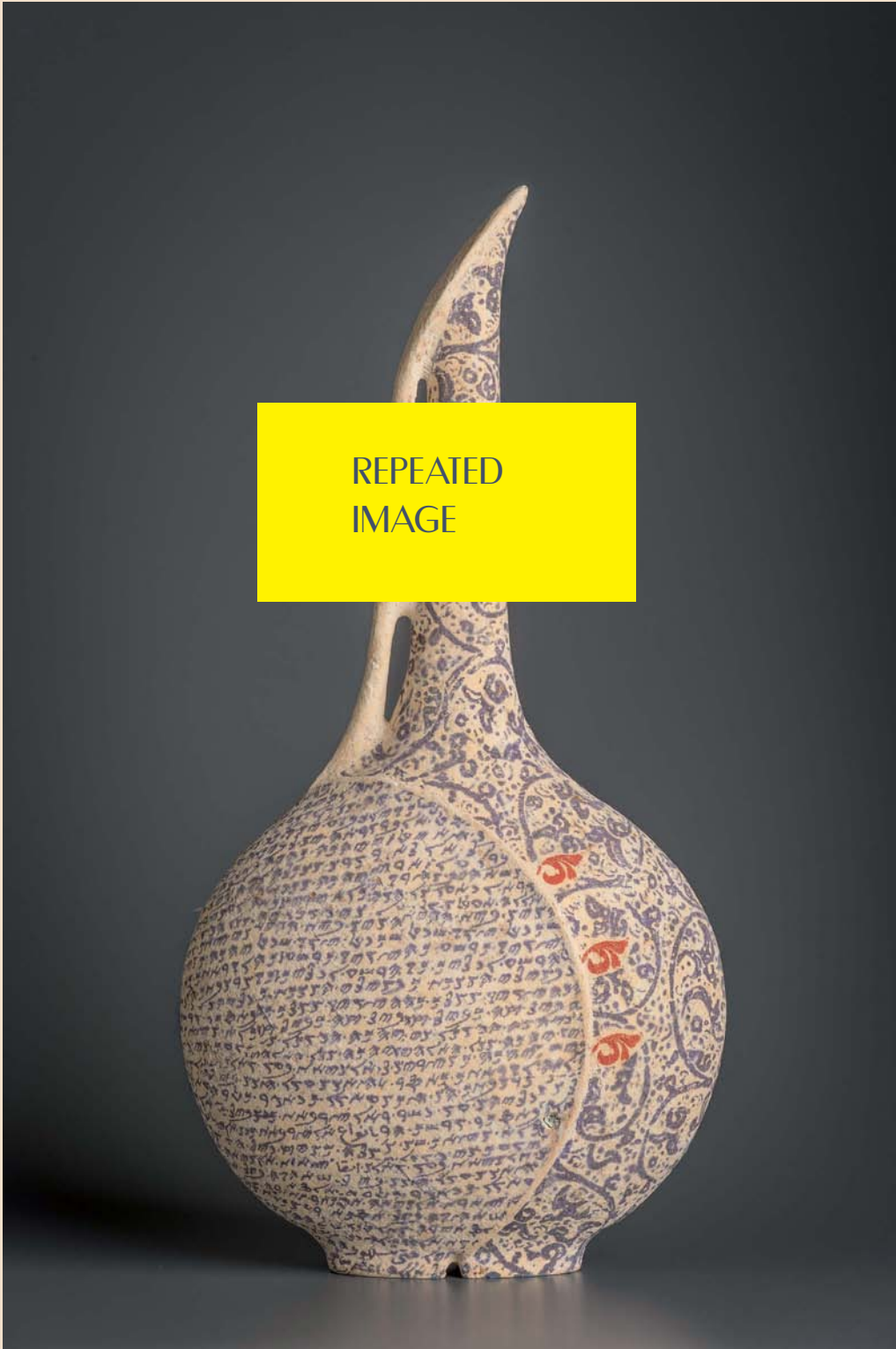
Sheffer has long nurtured an interest in language, in the way it changes and mutates with its users and context. Judeo-Arabic, the Sephardic Hebrew dialect of Medieval Spain, written in the Arabised script of the time, appears on *Lekitos VI* and *Chalcos V*, borrowed from twelfth and fourteenth century philosophical treatises. She also uses ancient texts, including early Nabatean and Aramaic scripts from the third century BC, which are tantalisingly familiar and almost legible to those well versed in the languages of the Middle East.

Sheffer's ceramics feel familiar but are startlingly original. They have the richness and intricacy of a Persian carpet. They are at once passionate and deeply intellectual; epic in scope but intimate in scale. They resonate with the vast historical and cultural terrain her work treads while still being beautiful elegant domestic artefacts.

Dr. Claudia Clare, 2015



SHEFAH VI, 2011 ▲
26 x 52 x 22 cm



REPEATED
IMAGE

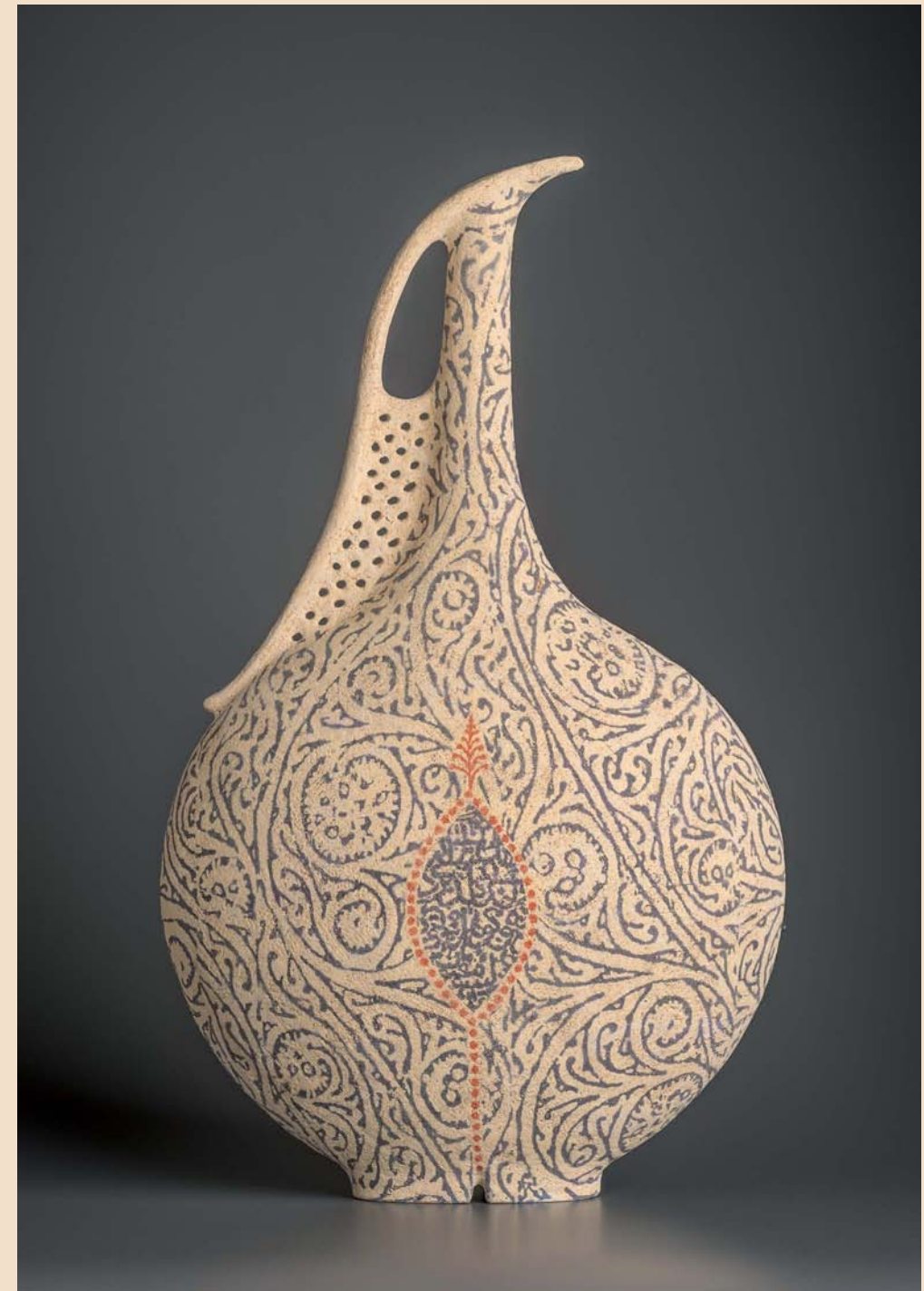
▲
Pyxis VI, 2015
45 x 23 x 12 cm

Lekitos VI, 2015 ▶
57 x 31 x 16 cm





Chalcos V, 2015
42 x 41 x 19 cm



Chalcos IX, 2015
52 x 31 x 15 cm





▲ MARTABAN II, 2015
43 x 33 x 16 cm

ABANICO IX, 2015 ▶
48 x 22 x 13 cm





NABAT I, 2015
44 x 40 x 18 cm



CHALCOS IX, 2015
47 x 31 x 15 cm

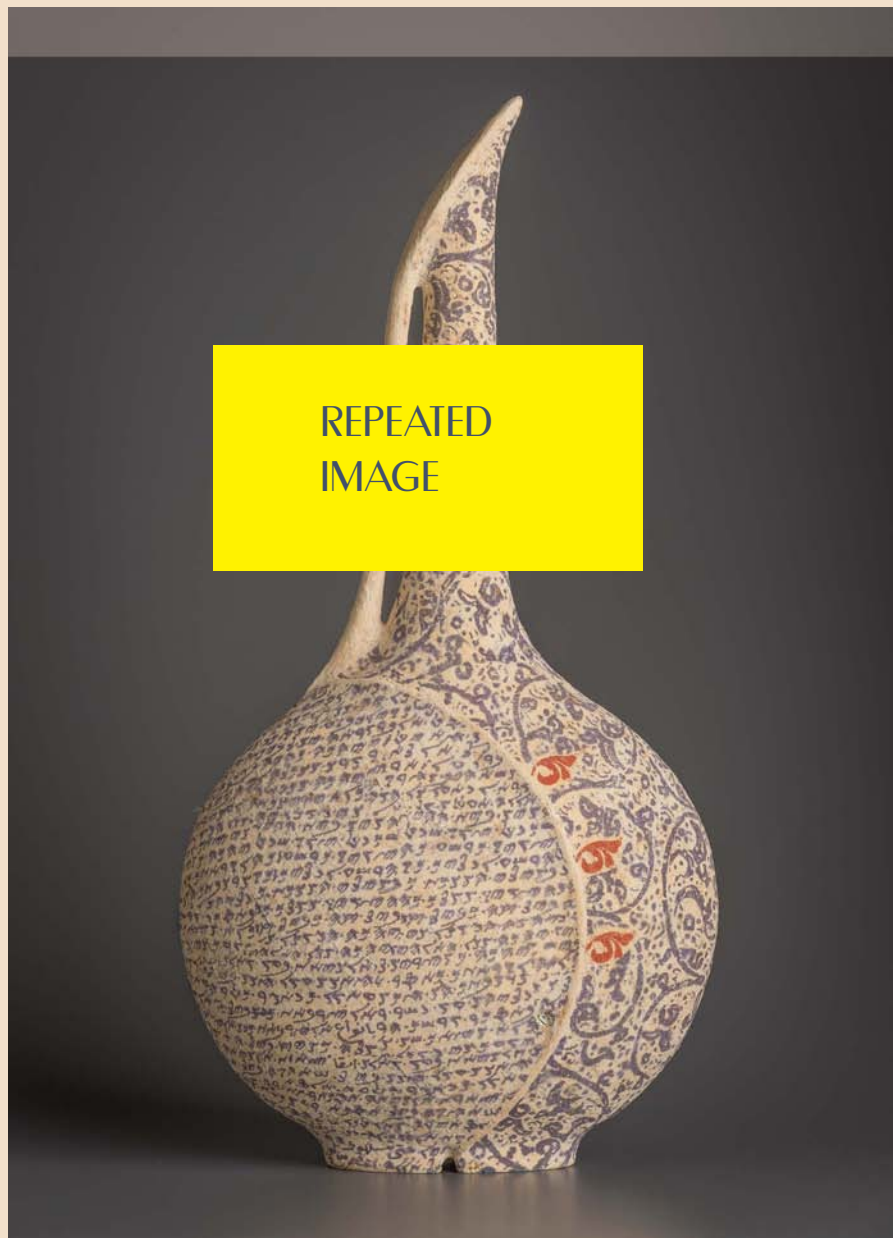


Hydria IV, 2015
49 x 30 x 15 cm



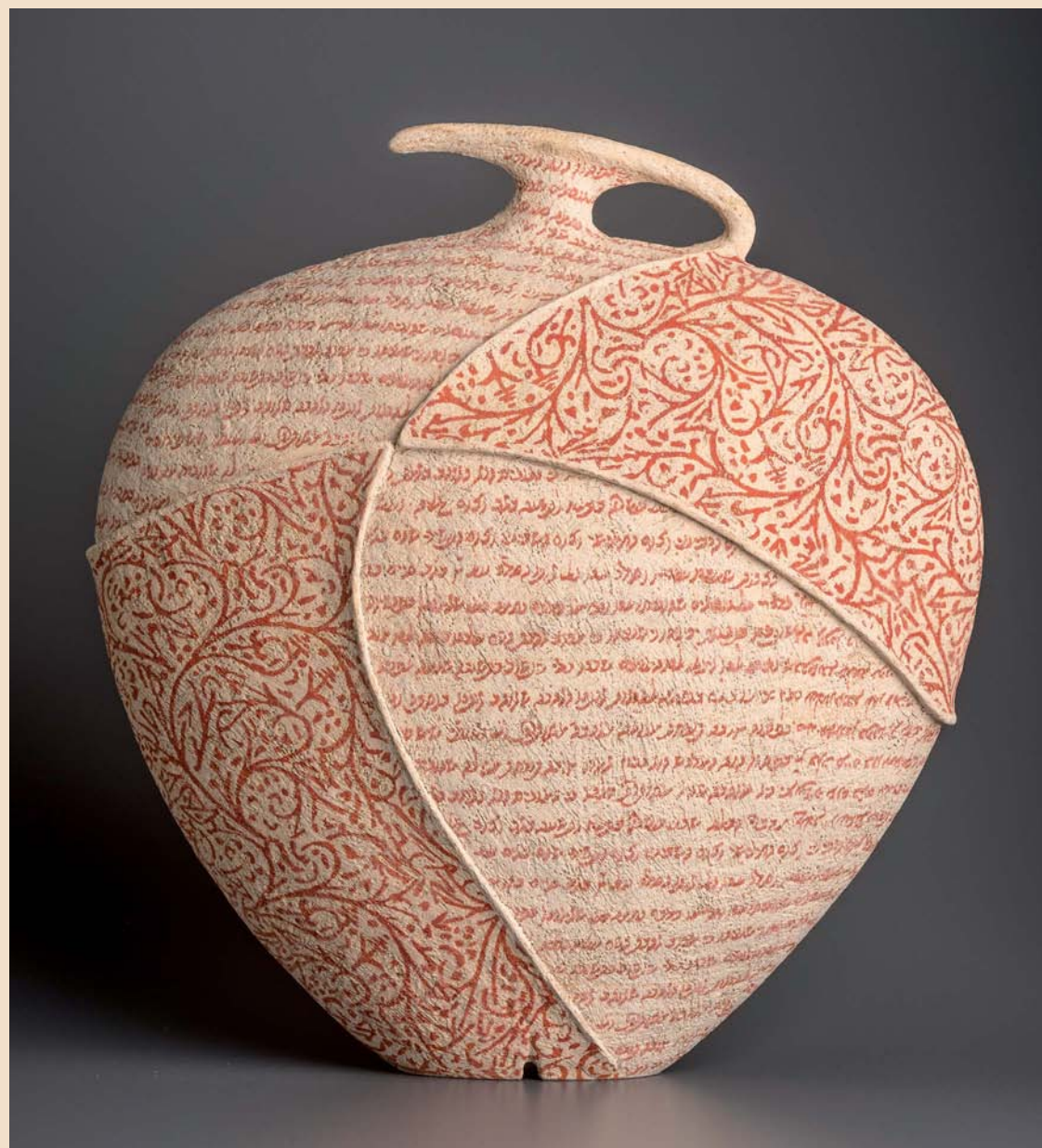
Abanico V, 2015
62 x 33 x 16 cm





REPEATED
IMAGE

Pyxis, 2015
45 x 23 x 12 cm



Chalcos VI, 2015
44 x 41 x 20 cm



◀ Pyriform VI, 2015
50 x 24 x 12 cm

Abanico VI, 2015 ▶
37 x 35 x 17 cm

KEVERA I, 2015
54 x 27 x 15 cm



Pyxis V, 2015
45 x 22 x 13 cm

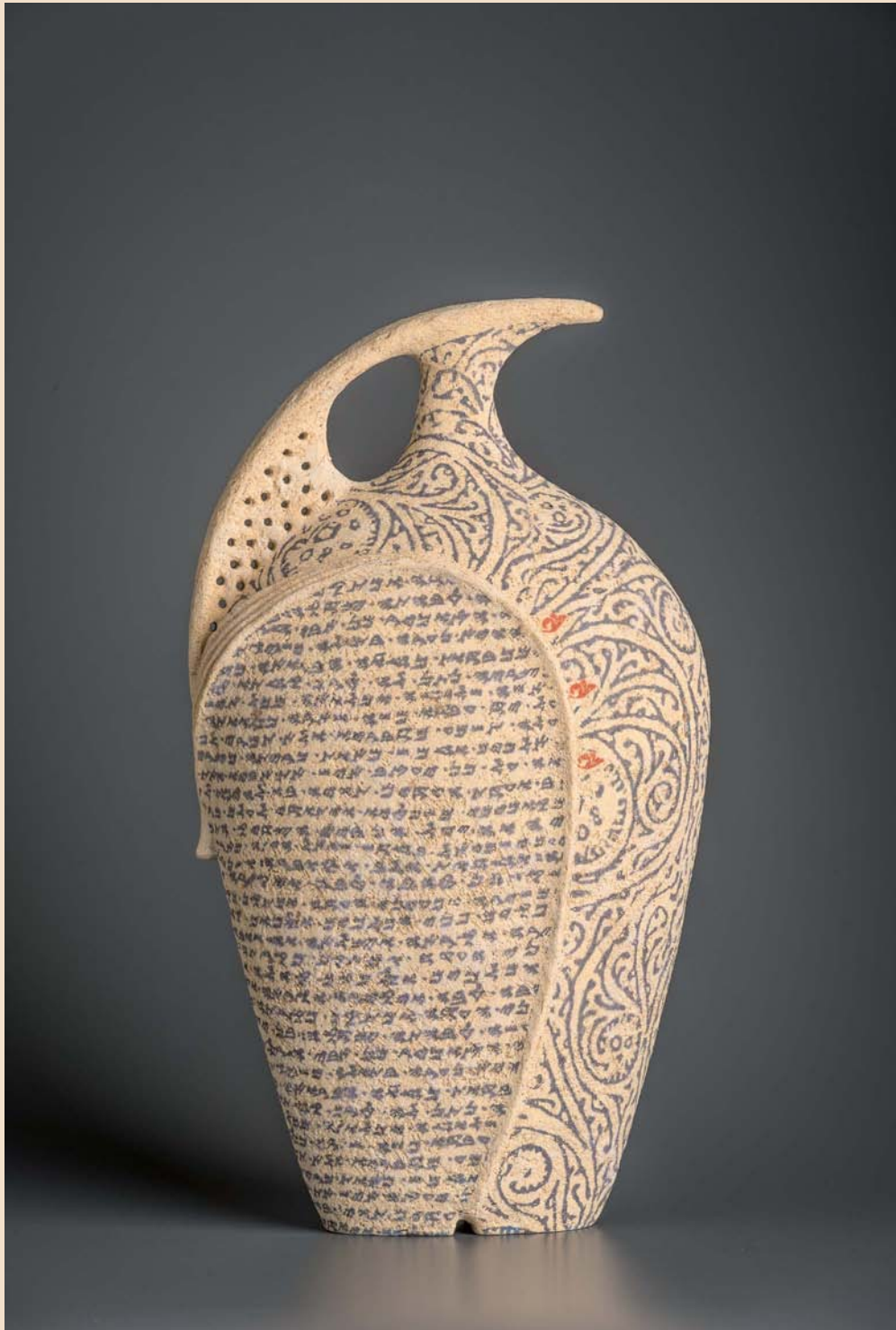




◀ KESHET VII, 2015
68 x 33 x 17 cm

Hydrion VI, 2015 ▶
50 x 31 x 15 cm





▲
KANKAN VIII, 2015
 35 x 20 x 11 cm



LEKITOS X, 2015 ▶
 52 x 27 x 14 cm

LITHOS V, 2015
58 x 27 x 15 cm



ABANICO IV, 2015
57 x 29 x 17 cm



CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

- 2004 Diploma in Ceramics, TAFE Lismore NSW
 1989 Diploma in Classical Homeopathy, Israel

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Intimate Distance* - Stephanie Hoppen Gallery, London
Lines of Descent - Anthea Polson Art, Main Beach, QLD
 2014 *Terra Oculta* - Stephanie Hoppen Gallery, London
Beneath My Feet - Lasting Impressions, Kenilworth
Edge of Memory - Beaver Galleries, Canberra
Embodied - Grafton Regional Gallery
 2013 *Confluence* - Anthea Polson Art, Main Beach, QLD
 2012 *TerraForma* - Gadfly Gallery, Perth
Life of Form - Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
 2011 *New Ceramic Sculptures* - Beaux Arts Bath, Bath UK
 2010 *Peregrinations* - Gadfly Gallery, Perth, WA
Continuum - Anthea Polson Art, Main Beach, QLD
 2009 *Origins* - Mossgreen Gallery, Melbourne
 2008 *Terra Intima* - Beaver Galleries, Canberra
 Thomas R. Riley - Cleveland, Ohio, USA
 2007 Salmon Galleries - Sydney, Jane Sauer Thirteen Moons Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA
 2005 *Unearthed I* - Beaver Galleries - Canberra

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Well Red* - Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
Unconventional Conformity, Tansey Contemporary, Santa-Fe NM USA
 2014 *The Object Divine* - Loraine Diggings Gallery, Melbourne
Ceramics Now - Bucharest, Romania
 2012 *Enduring Forms*, Aptos Cruz Gallery, Adelaide
 Art London, presented by Beaux Arts Bath
 2011 *The New York Arts of Pacific Asia Show* - Presented by Cavin Morris Gallery NY
Time&Place - Cudgegong Gallery, Gulgong NSW
 2010 *Art Event* - Jewish Museum of Australia - NGV International, Melbourne
White Heat - The Australian Ceramics Association's Biennial Exhibition Manly Art Gallery and Museum
 2009 *Sculpture 20* - Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
 2008 *Ceramicos* - Waywood Gallery, Byron Bay
 SOFA New York, USA - Presented by Jane Sauer Thirteen Moons Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA
 2007 Fusions Graduate Award Exhibition, Brisbane Gold-Coast International Ceramic Award
 2004 Graduating Students Award Exhibition - Inner City Clayworks Sydney, NSW

SELECTED COMPETITIONS, AWARDS, RESIDENCIES

- 2014 Awarded - Australia Council for the Arts grant: Skills and Arts Development, Barcelona studio
 2012 Winner - Byron Arts Classic, first prize for sculpture Stanthorpe Art Festival
 2011 Artist in residence - The Israel Museum, Archaeology wing, Jerusalem
 Travelling Scholarship Prize - Noosa Regional Gallery
 2005 Winner - The Josephine Ulrick Award for Excellence - Gold-Coast International Ceramic Award.
 1999 Awarded - Thursday Plantation Sculpture Show - Special Mention, Ballina NSW

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- National Gallery of Australia
 Powerhouse Museum - Sydney
 Jewish Museum of Australia
 Atelier d'Art de France, Paris
 Bendigo Art Gallery
 Ceramics Victoria Permanent Collection
 The Charles Bronfman Collection, USA
 The Russell Berrie Foundation, USA



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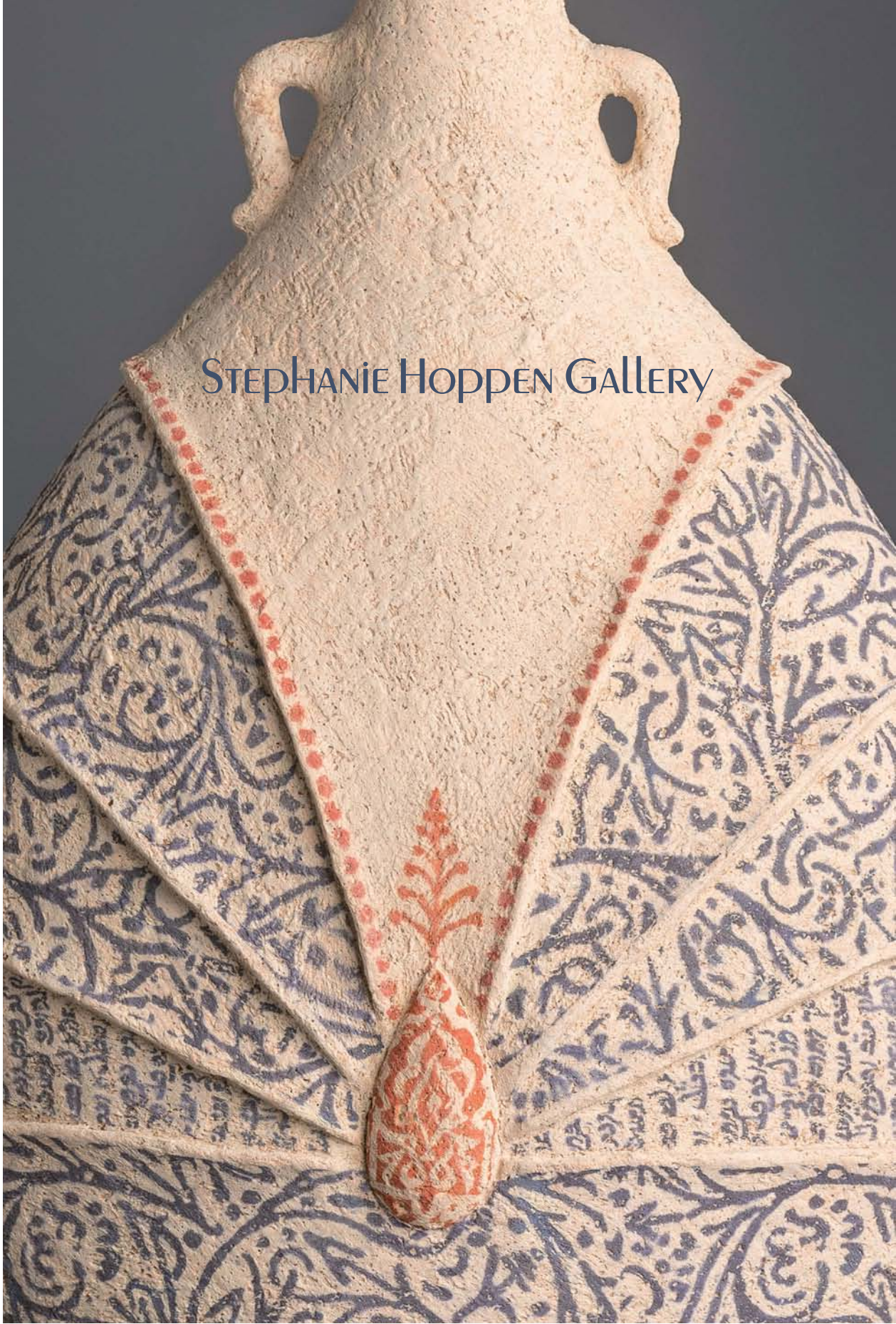
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