

LUCIE RIE

The Adventure of Pottery

13 Oct. 2024 – 30 March 2025



Lucie Rie. Vase. 1982. Stoneware with white glaze and golden manganese rim, 27 cm tall. Private Collection. Photo Sylvain Deleu, courtesy of Offer Waterman

The exhibition *Lucie Rie: The Adventure of Pottery* at CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art is a tribute to the life and work of the Austrian-British potter Lucie Rie. It will be the first large-scale display of Lucie Rie's ceramics in Denmark.

Lucie Rie (1902-1995) is one of the most renowned potters of the twentieth century, who forged her career as an independent potter in a male-dominated art world.

Lucie Rie's ceramics demonstrate a vast technical knowledge and a creative, experimental approach that continued throughout her life. Creating thousands of unique pieces, she has influenced the way ceramics are made and perceived - in the UK and beyond.

The exhibition features more than 100 pieces including bowls, vases, crockery, jewelry and buttons from UK institutions and private collectors.

Life in Vienna

Lucie Rie was born in Vienna in 1902 into a wealthy and educated Jewish family. Growing up in a time and environment where creativity and new ideas flourished, she enrolled at the city's famous Kunstgewerbeschule at the age of 19.

In the 1920s and 30s she won several awards for her work, which was influenced by modernist principles of rigour and experimentation. This approach would characterise her long career, as would the Jugendstil idea of the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' - the principle that all forms of art, craft and architecture should be rethought and integrated into a coherent whole.

A new beginning in London

In 1938 Lucie Rie fled Austria to escape the Nazi persecution of the Jewish people and settled in London with her husband Hans Rie. The marriage dissolved the following year when Hans Rie decided to emigrate to the United States.

Meanwhile, Lucie Rie tried to establish herself in London as a studio potter, but soon realised that the status and recognition she had enjoyed in Vienna could not be transferred to her new country. On the brink of the Second World War, she was forced to start her career anew.

Initially, Rie's modernist style was not well received by leading British potters. These included Bernard Leach, who was influenced by the Japanese tradition and ideas about the original ceramic techniques of the East. Nevertheless, the two became close friends and Leach often visited Rie in her workshop at 18 Albion Mews, where she lived and worked until the end of her life in 1995. In order to make a living during the war, she set up a button workshop with a small group of assistants, producing ceramic buttons for the clothing industry and major fashion houses. Many of the assistants were fellow emigrants, including Hans Coper, who arrived at the workshop in 1946. A young man with artistic ambitions, Coper had never worked with clay before, but he was a quick learner and eventually became one of Britain's most important studio potters. Coper shared Rie's studio until 1958 and they remained close friends, their work appearing side by side in countless exhibitions over the decades. Rie's buttons came back into the picture in 1989 when she met the Japanese designer Issey Miyaki, who wanted to use Rie's 'war buttons' in his collection. The exhibition at the CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art features a wide range of buttons, which Rie herself didn't think much of, but which are now considered small, individual works of art.

International acclaim

In 1948, Lucie Rie was granted British citizenship, giving her full freedom to express herself as an independent potter. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, she gained increasing recognition for both her utilitarian ceramics - vases, bowls, teapots - and her unique works. Throughout her long career, Rie experimented with techniques, clay and glazes. In Vienna she developed the unorthodox method of glazing raw clay and firing it only once. In the 1950s, inspired by the decoration on Bronze Age ceramics, she began to work with the sgraffito technique, using a sharp needle to scratch fine lines into the surface of the pot. This technique, along with the elegant spiral vases of the 1960s, became an iconic hallmark of her work. Late in life, Lucie Rie was awarded an OBE in 1968 and a CBE in 1981. When she died in London in 1995, aged 93, she had also been made a Dame, leaving behind a unique body of ceramic work.

Lucie Rie: The Adventure of Pottery at CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art is based on an original exhibition organised by Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge and MIMA, part of Teesside University, in association with the Holburne Museum, Bath.

The Danish display is curated locally and includes loans from 16 museums and private collectors. The exhibition has been made possible entirely thanks to the generous support of the AKO Foundation.

CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark

The museum is beautifully situated by the water with a view of Lillebælt. The old main building is an architectural gem, originally built as a widow's residence for the Hindsgavl Castle in 1856-1857.

In 1994, a group of Danish ceramicists from the association Clay Today initiated a museum of ceramic art in the old villa. Since then, the museum has been extended twice with large subterranean exhibition halls, first in 2015 and again in 2023.

The CLAY Museum presents changing exhibitions of Danish and international ceramics - from established potters and classics to new, experimental contemporary ceramicists.

The museum houses the extensive Royal Copenhagen Collection, which tells the story of Denmark's world-famous porcelain, earthenware and stoneware production since 1775.

The museum park contains a number of impressive ceramic sculptures that are part of Keramikruten - a circular route linking the museum and the centre of Middelfart.

www.claymuseum.dk

Kettle's Yard

The exhibition has been developed in close collaboration with Kettle's Yard in Cambridge, England, which has been part of the University of Cambridge since 1966.

The history of this unusual art gallery dates back to 1956, when Jim and Helen Ede transformed four derelict houses in Cambridge into a home full of art and found objects. Ten years later, Kettle's Yard became part of Cambridge University and has since become a renowned gallery with a remarkable house museum and collection of 20th century art.

Lucie Rie's work has been exhibited at Kettle's Yard several times over the years. Andrew Nairne OBE has been director of the museum since 2011.

kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk

AKO Foundation

The AKO Foundation is a London-based foundation that supports charitable causes that improve education, promote the arts or mitigate climate change. The foundation was established in 2013 by Nicolai Tangen, the founder of AKO Capital and a passionate art collector.

Nicolai Tangen is currently CEO of Norges Bank Investment Management. His extensive collection of Nordic Modernism, consisting of more than 5000 works, was recently donated to the AKO Art Foundation, which has placed it on indefinite deposit at Kunstsilo, in his birth city Kristiansand, Norway.

AKO Foundation works proactively and does not accept unsolicited applications. akofoundation.org



KETTLE'S YARD

AKO Foundation

CLAY

KERAMIKMUSEUM
DANMARK
MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ART
DENMARK