

Tulla Elieson

Sisse Lee

# *Conversations*

RAM Galleri

Collect Art Fair





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26.02–2.03.2021



# *RAM GALLERI*

RAM is an interdisciplinary gallery specialising in the intersection between art, craft and design. Founded in 1989 by various artist organisations, RAM operates as an independent gallery and is today a leading Norwegian arena for exhibiting contemporary craft in dialogue with visual art. Over three decades RAM has shown a great number of recognised artists and makers, such as Marit Tingleff, Peter Voulkos, Sigurd Bronger, Irene Nordli, Kiyoshi Yamamoto and Wendimagegn Belete. In recent years RAM has placed several important works in public and private collections, and is dedicated to fostering a new generation of emerging collectors.

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# *Tulla Elieson & Sisse Lee in conversation with Joakim Borda-Pedreira*

Tulla Elieson has been a prominent figure of Norwegian art ceramics since the 1970-ties. Notwithstanding she has also been regarded as unconventional in her approach to ceramics as a craft. Elieson has herself expressed a sense of outsidership in respect to the Norwegian ceramics' milieu, as her work is informed by aesthetic principals connected to visual arts rather than craft. Design historian Mats Linder has described her work as follows:

*Tulla Elieson's artistic practice is rooted in craft, but her work is more connected to formal expressions belonging to the visual arts. Only the material, in this case clay and glaze, are historically defined as pertaining to the craft artist." According to Linder, Elieson is an artist who makes ceramic images.*

To this we can add that she, at least since the early 1980-ties, can be said to have worked within the aesthetic tendency often described as Post-Minimalism, which borrows formal aspects of minimalism, while implying a critique to its lack of subjectivity and materiality. Postminimalism embraces intuitive processes and allows for the presence of the hand in the artwork.

Sisse Lee (b. 1989) is a recent graduate (MFA) of the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 2018, but has already gained international attention for her sophisticated porcelain vessels that adapts archaic techn-



iques to ultra-contemporary forms. She continues the vessel tradition, making utilitarian objects with and oddly sculptural appearance.

In the year of 2000, Tulla Elieson was offered a workshop at Norsk Teknisk Porselen (NTP), a factory for industrial and sanitary porcelain, where it was possible to produce large and flat ceramic objects. This became a turning point for the artist, who began to produce the monumental flat objects for which she is known today.

In 2018 Tulla Elieson participated in the yearly national craft exhibition, organized by the Norwegian Crafts Council, with a series of largescale objects entitled Travel Goods I–IV. The series made a huge impression and were awarded the Craft Prize, which in addition to a respectable sum of cash also entailed the invitation to exhibit at RAM the following year. For Elieson this was a critical moment after a physically challenging work period and she doubted if she would at all be able to complete a solo exhibition with entirely new works.

*Tulla:* I was so worn out that I needed some time off to rest and recharge. I knew that I always need at least two years of production for a solo show with new material. Meanwhile I had encountered Sisse's vessels at the same craft exhibition and was very taken with them, especially the textures and the characteristic shapes of the handles. The idea grew eventually that I should to the exhibition together with someone for the first time. I saw the possibility of recruiting a young assistant that could help me with the work for the exhibition, as I lacked the physical strength to do it on my own.

All the ceramicists of my generation started out with pottery and the turning wheel, making objects for the table. But early on I began to move into another direction, working with surfaces. It is only recently that I began to think about how it could be possible to adapt somet-

hing from the pottery world into my works, while keeping to the surface of the object.

For the exhibition *Conversations*, which was shown at RAM in Oslo, in November 2020, Tulla made a series of flat figurative works that drew inspiration from Sisse Lee's vessels, recreating images and textures from the vessels. The works can be described as two-dimensional renderings of three-dimensional objects. Not only did they trace the shapes and details such as handles and curves, but also the pinching and coiling of Lee's hand-built cylinders. For the first time in many years in Eliason's work, there was a strong presence of the hand in the surface of the work.

*Sisse:* At first glance our practices are very different. We had seen each other's work before we met and were very aware of how vastly separate our work is, albeit within the same discipline. And yet, we immediately felt a strong mutual attraction to the idea of working together in spite of these differences. We both felt it was an exciting opportunity.

*Joakim:* There is an inherent hierarchy in the relationship of an older and well-established artist with his or her young and less experienced assistant. There is an expectation almost that the assistant takes the role of a disciple. How did you handle that? Was it difficult to exhibit together as equal partners, while Sisse simultaneously worked as Tulla's assistant?

*Tulla:* No, I felt it was a natural development. If I was to be allowed to use Sisse in my work and even take her works as a source of inspiration for my own, it was necessary to include her in the exhibition on equal terms. Equal in the exhibition, even though she would help me with my work in the studio. All the while Sisse worked with her own vessels, she didn't need me for that.

*Sisse:* I see the situation as multifaceted. We have had many conversations in the studio, as well as an artistic dialogue throughout the whole process. Meanwhile I have felt the responsibility of making my own work, on my own, parallel with the work I did for Tulla. But I believe that if the artistic dialogue is there, that erases all hierarchies.

*Tulla:* When I saw that she was aligning her colour palette with my works, I realized that we were both inspired by each other and that our dialogue would be reflected in the exhibition.

*Oslo, 27 October 2020*









## *Tulla Elieson*

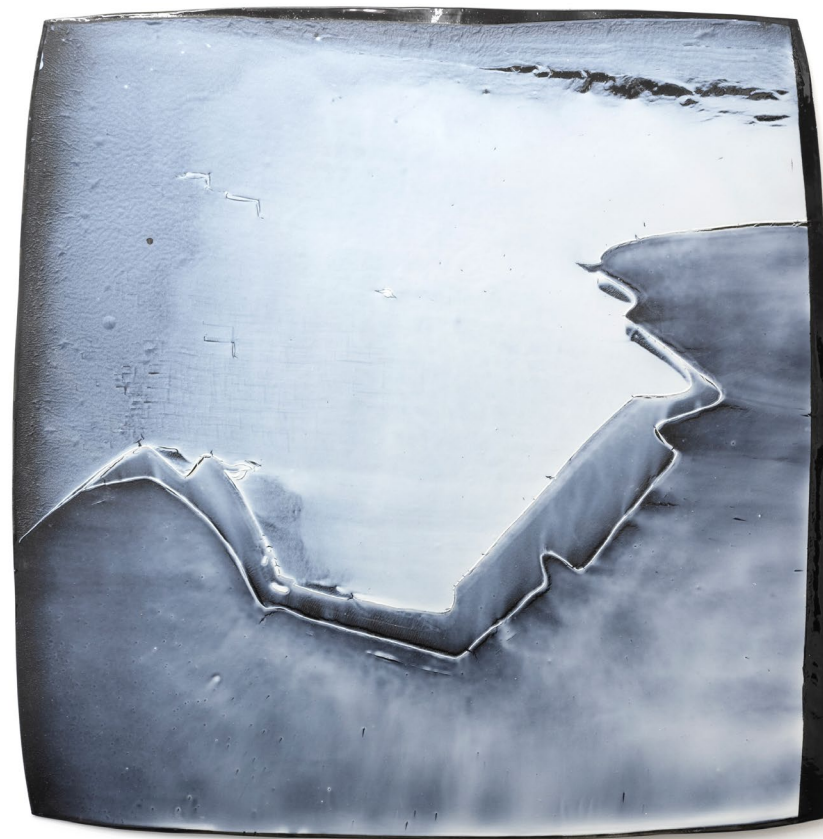
Tulla Elieson (b. 1950) is a Norwegian ceramicist with studies from Bath Academy of Art (1970–74). She is represented in a large number of public and private collections, such as National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, KODE Art Museums and Composer Homes, Bergen, Nordenfjeldske Museum of Decorative Arts, Sørlandets Art Museum and Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum. She has exhibited widely and has participated in all the major ceramic biennials, such as Korea (2007) and Faenza (2001). In 2008 she was awarded the Norwegian Crafts Prize (Kunsthåndverksprisen).

[www.elieson.no](http://www.elieson.no)

*Tulla Elieson / Rabbit, Doughnut, Scout, Lovehandles*  
2020 / Porcelain, glaze / 107 x 108 cm x 4











*Previous five pages:*

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*Tulla Elieson / Blue North I / 2020 / Porcelain, glaze / 126 x 122 cm*

*Tulla Elieson / Blue North V / 2021 / Porcelain, glazes / 126 x 122 cm*

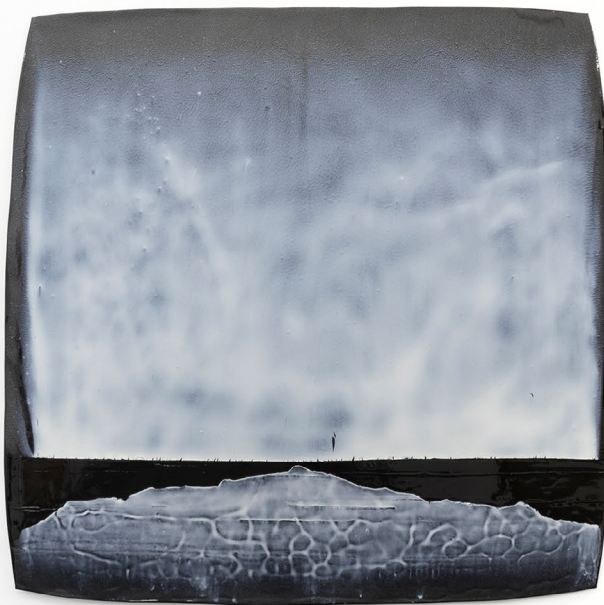
*Tulla Elieson / Blue North III / 2020 / Porcelain, glaze / 126 x 122 cm*

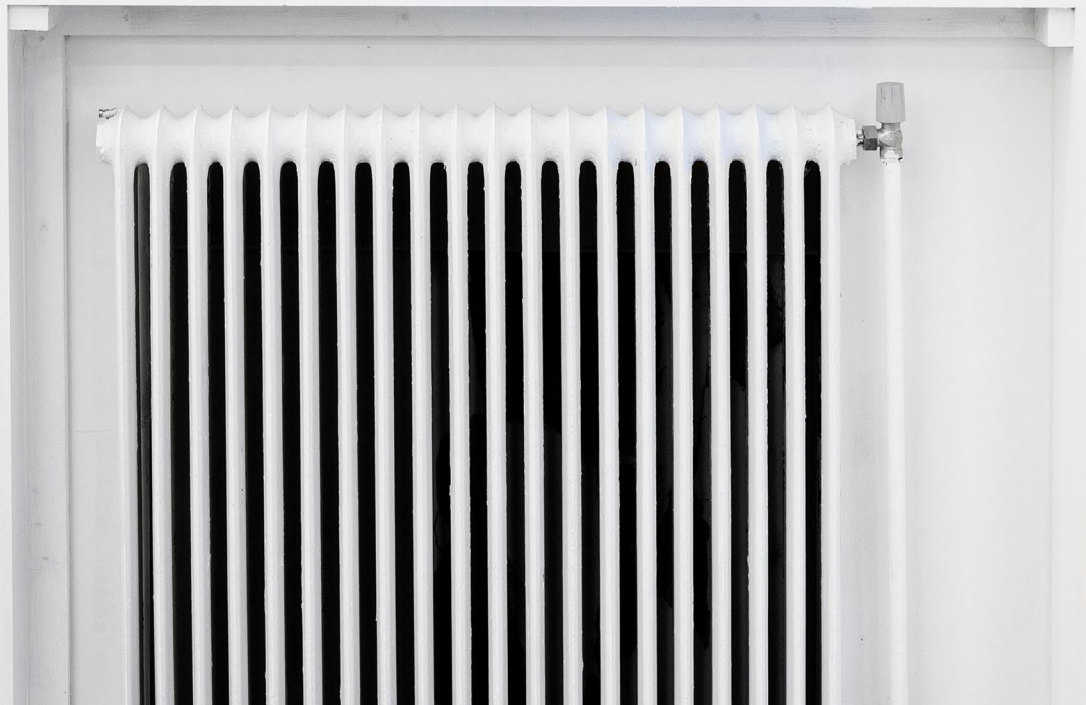
*Tulla Elieson / Blue North VI / 2021 / Porcelain, glaze / 120 x 125 cm*

*Tulla Elieson / Untitled / 2020 / Porcelain, glaze / 128 x 129 cm*















## *Sisse Lee*

Sisse Lee (b. 1987, Denmark) studied at the The Royal Academy of Design in Bornholm and the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (MFA, 2018). She has exhibited in several venues in Norway and abroad, such as Kunsthall Grenland (2020), Kunstnerforbundet (2019), Talente 2019, Munich, CHART Art Fair (2019), Copenhagen, and Grønbecks Gård, Bornholm (2016). In 2018 she was nominated to the Bo Bedre Design Award in the category Craft of the Year.

[www.sisselee.dk](http://www.sisselee.dk)

*Sisse Lee / Sylindere, 2020 / Porselen / 56 x 28 cm*

























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