

“Peter Shire at Kayne Griffin Corcoran.” Damn. 12 April 2018. Web.

Kayne Griffin Corcoran

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Peter Shire at Kayne Griffin Corcoran Drawings, Impossible Teapots, Furniture & Sculpture



Peter Shire, Barbie's Ivory Tower, 1986

Kayne Griffin Corcoran presents their spring 2018 programming with Peter Shire: Drawings, Impossible Teapots, Furniture & Sculpture in the Main Gallery.

Born in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, where he still lives and works, Peter Shire is an institution unto himself. His work can be found throughout much of Los Angeles as Shire is very much imbued with the city's ethos. A prime example being his installation Angel's Point which sits atop Elysian Park along the Chavez Ravine overlooking Dodger Stadium and Downtown—encapsulating Los Angeles from a post-modern vantage point among the palm trees, smog, and other Los Angeles landmarks. During his formative years at Chouinard Art Institute, now CalArts, in the 1970's, Shire studied under Ralph Bacerra and Adrian Saxe, whose influence can be seen in the levels of whimsy and contemplation that play into Shire's own practice. It was in 1977 when Ettore Sottsass spotted Shire's work in the new-wave magazine WET and invited him to join the Milan-based design collective Memphis. Shire was one of the youngest and only American members and through his work with the collective, Shire's very specific language found light and his practice became global.

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Shire’s self-proclaimed love affair with clay started early on, but was grounded by predecessors who had started to experiment with fired-clay sculptures already in the 1950’s and 60’s—artists like John Mason, Ken Price, and Peter Voulkos who were all engaged with liberating the medium from its practical use. For Shire, however, practical use was not a disservice to the medium. His interest in Pattern and Decoration, a movement from the 1970’s and 80’s, brought to his work an amalgamation of decorative and folk-art traditions. Shire himself refers to his own style of work as “California high kitsch”—a specific kitsch that is able to mold and grow with the modernism that is already at hand within the Los Angeles landscape. His use of clay and his exploration with design and furniture all refer back to his larger interest in color and painterly techniques. Shire’s use of clay and other objects allow for him to engage with painting within a three-dimensional realm. His drawings, teapots, furniture and sculpture all exist on the same plane—the works on paper can act as plans for the objects that are forthcoming, engaging with his larger interest in the functionality and efficiency of his pots—getting everything to the last drop out.