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PRESS RELEASE

## Phillips to Host Auction Dedicated to Contemporary Studio Artworks from the Estate of Jack R. Bershada

New York Sale on 8 June to Feature Works by Wendell Castle and Jennifer Lee, as well as Ceramics by Hans Coper, Toshiko Takaezu, Gordon Baldwin, and Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye



**Jennifer Lee**

*Nine vessels*, 1988-1997

Estimate: ranging from \$5,000-7,000 to \$30,000-40,000

NEW YORK – 9 MAY 2022 – Phillips is pleased to present *Contemporary Studio Artworks from the Estate of Jack R. Bershada*, a dedicated auction on 8 June, presenting over sixty works from the celebrated collection that Mr. Bershada built with his wife, Helen. Together over the course of six decades, the Bershads championed makers such as Hans Coper and Wendell Castle well before their institutional and market recognition. Ceramists such as Jennifer Lee, Gordon Baldwin, Alison Britton, and Bodil Manz are also well-represented in the sale, offering buyers an exciting chance to expand their own collections. This dedicated auction will follow Phillips' seasonal New York Design auction on 7 June.

**Meaghan Roddy, Head of Design, West Coast and Senior International Specialist**, said, "Over the last sixty years, Mr. and Mrs. Bershada built their stunning collection. Through their collecting and philanthropy, they honored their hometown of Philadelphia's long history within the studio craft community and cemented their own reputation as ardent supporters of the arts. The Bershads' collection is not only wide in its chronological and geographical sweep but also deep in its ambition and we are honored to have been entrusted with its sale."

## About The Bershads

Over nearly six decades, Philadelphia lawyer Jack R. Bershad and his wife, artist Helen Bershad, amassed an impressive collection of modern and contemporary studio ceramics, glass, woodworking, and fine art, a curated selection featured in this auction. In addition to collecting on a global scale, the Bershads also acquired works by Philadelphia-area makers such as Toshiko Takaezu, William Daley, and Rudolf Staffel. The vast majority of the works were purchased at the same time that they were executed, making this a rare chance to acquire objects that have remained in private hands since their initial production. Though the collection contains works by some of the most important figures within contemporary studio art, there are also pieces by artists whose work has never before been offered at auction. This sale will be an exciting opportunity to witness over sixty handmade objects that exemplify some of the highest achievements within art and design over the last sixty years.

## Highlights from the Collection



**Wendell Castle**  
*Center table, 1973*  
Estimate: \$50,000 - 70,000

inimitable fashion that allows her works to appear as perfectly preserved artifacts is especially salient in the Bershad's collection. Lee's practice is an exploratory one; by allowing her materials to age, sometimes for over a decade, before mixing them together to form and fire, the resulting works are striking for their self-containment and balance. Lee hand-builds different bodies of clay upon each other, creating strata as akin to ancient geological findings. The passing of time is critical to Lee, who deftly handles the natural processes of decay and erosion. Jennifer Lee was also the winner of the 2018 Loewe Craft Prize. Bodil Manz, another artist well-represented in the collection, was a finalist for the award in 2020.

Wendell Castle's *Center table* and three other works featured in this sale are exemplary of his various explorations in the stack-laminate technique, a method honed shortly after completing his training in 1961 from the University of Kansas. This technique involves the stacking of wooden sheets upon one another, enabling the woodworker to carve complex shapes and sinuous lines from the amalgamated material. Utilizing this process, Castle sculpted fantastic and winsome pieces, each one a sculptural masterpiece and a functional object. He was amongst the most outstanding contributors to his craft, committing his nearly six-decade career to expanding the boundaries of the field.

The sale also includes nine pots from maker Jennifer Lee that are emblematic of her unique style. A major figure in contemporary English ceramics, Jennifer Lee is acclaimed for her quietly rhythmic hand-built vessels. Her striking practice of allowing her oxides and clays to age in such a



**Jennifer Lee**  
*Four vessels, 1987-1997*  
Estimate: ranging from \$8,000-12,000 to \$30,000-40,000



**Hans Coper**  
"Cycladic" pot, circa 1972  
Estimate: \$40,000 - 60,000

Coming out of the last phase of Hans Coper's career, the present "Cycladic" pot shows the reduced scale of his later works, recalling the clay figures of Bronze Age Greece, a primeval style that Coper is acclaimed for. Enscorced amongst the greatest contributors to modern English pottery, Coper learned his craft in the London studio of Lucie Rie, having emigrated from Germany as a young Jewish engineering student in 1939. Coper favored compound shapes that, while simple in appearance, were in fact complex in construction. He would build his vessels by bringing several thrown forms together, for example joining bowls rim to rim. Coper eschewed glazes, preferring the textured surfaces achieved through the application of white and black slips, which evoke the abraded texture of excavated vessels. This interest in ancient objects was very much in step with other modernists of his time—Coper admired Constantin Brancusi and Alberto Giacometti and his textured markings have been compared to sculptors such as William Turnbull.

Hailed as one of the most celebrated artists in the sculptural ceramics movement, six works by Gordon Baldwin are featured in the sale. Seeking to develop ceramics beyond utilitarian function, Baldwin dedicated his early career to hand-building abstract sculptural forms, experimenting with form and gestural surface decoration, as appreciable in *Standing Form* and *Monad*. In a continuation of his abstract sensibility, later series conjured the vessel form, re-defining the corporeal borders of the shape. Baldwin washes many works in exclusively black or white glazes, referring to these dichotomous tones as his inner and external beings, respectively. Baldwin's work is held in the permanent collections of the British Museum, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, amongst several others.



**Gordon Baldwin**  
*Standing Form*, 1986  
Estimate: \$6,000 - 8,000



**Toshiko Takaezu**  
"Closed Form (Ocean Edge)", circa 1995  
Estimate: \$3,000 - 5,000

Ceramic artist Toshiko Takaezu, who will be the subject of an upcoming exhibition at The Noguchi Museum, dedicated her five-decade career to abstract expressions of form. Born in Honolulu in 1922 to a family of Japanese emigres, Takaezu was first introduced to pottery in 1940. During a formative eight-month trip to Japan between 1955 and 1956, Takaezu encountered the avant-garde Sodeisha group ("Crawling through Mud Association"), a collective of artists who aimed to reorient ceramics from the utilitarian Mingei (folk-craft) movement to a means of sculptural expression. After this trip, Takaezu created her first hand-built closed form, whose rotund volume and tapered rim would become her signature structure, often glazed them in abstract, gestural strokes. "Closed Form (Ocean Edge)" comes from her Ocean Edge series, a body of work that explores the effects of glaze layering on porcelain, relying on rich turquoise and cranberry red pigments. Seeking to activate one's auditory sense, Takaezu placed clay beads into the closed forms,

allowing them to gently rattle. Internationally celebrated, Takaezu's work is included in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the DeYoung/Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, amongst several others.



**Bodil Manz**  
*Six cylinders*, 2000-2010  
 Estimate: each \$2,000 - 3,000



**Wayne Higby**  
*"Cathedral Canyon"*, 1985  
 Estimate: \$15,000 - 20,000



**Alison Britton**  
*"Flask/Filter"*, 2005-2006  
 Estimate: \$8,000 - 12,000

**Auction:** 8 June 2022

**Auction viewing:** 2-7 June

**Location:** 432 Park Avenue, New York, NY

**Click here for more information:** <https://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY050322>

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