

# PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

**maak**  
contemporary ceramics

## Phillips x Maak Announce

### ***The Art of Fire: Selections from the Collection of Dr. John P Driscoll***

The Most Important Collection of Contemporary Ceramics to Ever Come to Auction

To be Sold at Phillips London on 10 November 2021



A selection of ceramics by Hans Coper

LONDON – 29 SEPTEMBER 2021 – Phillips and Maak have come together to present an important selection of works from the seminal collection of International Studio Ceramics of the late Dr. John P Driscoll, New York. *The Art of Fire: Selections from the Collection of Dr. John P Driscoll* will celebrate Driscoll's cultural legacy and offer some 160 highlight lots from his significant collection. Exceptional examples of ceramic art by the masters of British Studio Ceramics Bernard Leach, Hamada Shoji, Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, James Tower, Elizabeth Fritsch, Gordon Baldwin, Ewen Henderson and Edmund de Waal, alongside exceptional examples of Japanese and Danish ceramics, have been carefully selected to reflect the unique eye of an extraordinary collector and passionate patron. The auction will take place at Phillips Berkeley Square on 10 November 2021.

**Ben Williams, Phillips International Consultant - Ceramics**, said, "*These are the 'famous' pots, the ones that appeared in the books and exhibitions that helped launch a movement. John Driscoll was never in any doubt that ceramics could provide a vehicle for artistic expression equal to painting and sculpture, worthy of the same level of appreciation and scholarly study, these are the pots that prove that.*"

**Marijke Varrall-Jones, Director of Maak Contemporary Ceramics**, said, “When John Driscoll was first introduced to British Studio Ceramics in the 1970s, he discovered a movement defined by its vitality and inventive creativity and the appeal was instant. With Bernard Leach recognised as 'where it all began' the historical context resonated with John's academic inclination, allowing him to explore the aesthetic and historical connections of British studio ceramics to Asian and European traditions. This collection reflects the diversity and innovation that first inspired John to start collecting and is widely regarded as the most comprehensive single owner collection to be presented to the market.”

## About the Late Dr. John P Driscoll Collection

Dr. John P Driscoll was a well-known and respected art dealer from New York specialising in the Hudson River School. Early in his career he realised if he wanted to collect personally it would be necessary to collect in an area different from his professional speciality. In the 70s Driscoll was introduced to ceramics whilst working under Bill Hull, Director of Penn State Museum of Art. Hull's 1976 exhibition *Twenty-Four British Potters* ignited in Driscoll a four-decade passion and drive to build a comprehensive survey of studio ceramics from the 20th century.

**“My first purchases from the *Twenty-Four British Potters* show were outstanding works, yet economically modest...After I bought those initial pots, I was just viscerally, intellectually, and aesthetically energized, and focused on the quest to see more and acquire more...”** John Driscoll interview with Glenn Adamson, *Things of Beauty Growing*

Driscoll's interest in studio ceramics went beyond the aesthetic as he built relationships with some of the century's greats including Lucie Rie, Elizabeth Fritsch and Ewen Henderson. Every year Driscoll visited the UK to meet with the potters he admired and collected – his tendency was to search out pots from different points in each artist's career, with the aim to tell each artist's story within his collection. Driscoll combined an academic approach to collecting with a passion to live and experience the pieces in his home.

The collection is not limited to British Studio potters as Driscoll grew his understanding and knowledge of Japanese, Danish and Nigerian artists. He also collected archival documents from some of the leading potters of the 20th Century, including his own correspondence with Elizabeth Fritsch. Key pieces from the Leach archives have been donated from the collection of the late Dr. John P Driscoll to the Crafts Study centre in Farnham.



**Bernard Leach**  
*Charger with 'Tree of Life' design, circa 1924*  
Estimate: £15,000-20,000

## Sale Highlights

Driscoll enjoyed searching out works with exceptional provenance which told a story. Of the Rie and Coper pots in the sale, will be a monumental piece Coper himself exchanged for a goat called Jennea with Writhlington School near Frome and a Rie from pre-war Vienna which she carried wrapped in clothes in her suitcase when she fled Austria for England in 1938 and lived with for her entire life. A further highlight includes a historically important Bernard Leach Dish with inscription by William Blake.

A number of works featured in the November sale have previously been shown at Fitzwilliam Museum and are included in the book *Things of Beauty Growing: British Studio Pottery*.

Maak Contemporary Ceramics will be presenting further curated selections from the collection of the late Dr. John P Driscoll over the course of 2022/23.



**Hans Coper**  
*Monumental ovoid pot, circa 1968*  
Estimate: £80,000-120,000



**Lucie Rie**  
*Footed bowl, circa 1976*  
Estimate: £50,000-70,000



**Ladi Kwali**  
*'Airplane Water Pot', 1962*  
Estimate: £6,000-9,000



**Hans Coper**  
*Monumental 'Writhlington School' pot, 1972*  
Estimate: £80,000-120,000



**Lucie Rie**  
*Early and rare bowl and saucer, circa 1936*  
Estimate: £4,000-6,000



**Koike Shōko**  
*Lidded 'Shell Vessel', circa 1997*  
Estimate: £20,000-30,000

**Auction:** 10 November 2021 2pm  
**Auction viewing:** 3-10 November  
**Location:** 30 Berkeley Square, London

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@maakceramics  
#PhillipsxMaak  
#DrJohnPDriscollCollection

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**PHILLIPS X MAAK**

Combining Phillips' international prestige in esign sales and Maak Contemporary Ceramics' specialist ceramics expertise, the two auction houses have come together to bring the collection of the late Dr. John P Driscoll to auction for the first time. The sale will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Glenn Adamson and Simon Olding. The auction catalogue will reference both the personal and historic wealth of this collection.

**ABOUT PHILLIPS**

Phillips is a leading global platform for buying and selling 20th and 21st century art and design. With dedicated expertise in the areas of 20th Century and Contemporary Art, Design, Photographs, Editions, Watches, and Jewelry, Phillips offers professional services and advice on all aspects of collecting. Auctions and exhibitions are held at salerooms in New York, London, Geneva, and Hong Kong, while clients are further served through representative offices based throughout Europe, the United States and Asia. Phillips also offers an online auction platform accessible anywhere in the world. In addition to providing selling and buying opportunities through auction, Phillips brokers private sales and offers assistance with appraisals, valuations, and other financial services.

## ABOUT MAAK CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS

Established in 2009, Maak Contemporary Ceramics is the preeminent auction house for studio ceramics with a global audience. Working in association with Phillips for the collection of the late Dr John P Driscoll, Maak will offer for sale further curated selections in 2022/23. With 2021 representing a decade of Maak presenting regular auctions in London dedicated to the very best of studio ceramics and ceramic art through their online auction platform. Entrusted with the sale of important private collections, such as the Miami Private Collection in 2019 and the Dayabandhu Collection in 2020 as well as distinguished individual works, Maak has been well positioned to present the finest selections of ceramics in their highly anticipated auction schedule.

Maak provides specialist consultancy services to private collectors and institutions around the world with their specialist focus allowing them to nurture the market with a unique approach. Maak's online presence offers a comprehensive resource for ceramic enthusiasts and includes news on the most up-to-date events and insider knowledge on the ceramic's market. Visit [www.maaklondon.com](http://www.maaklondon.com) for further information.

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