

edaphic* north



Traversing Curious Paths

“The show is intended to lead down curious paths of colour and connection...”

Lene Kuhl Jakobsen recently spent seven weeks at the Erik Nyholm Ceramic Studio situated in the lake and forest area in Denmark, not far from where she grew up. Living and working during summer, in a nearly 200 year old farmhouse, surrounded by “intensely green” landscape, had a profound effect on her artistic expression.

“All around the buildings and inside were pieces of pottery, some broken, some hidden in the vegetation to be discovered. In the studio were drawers full of sketches and books on the shelves, the old kick wheel, a vast supply of glazes and glaze ingredients and, not the least, the presence of the big gas kiln which had not been fired for several years.”

In ‘edaphic north’ we are invited to take part in her experience, recognizing the effects of the natural environment and the posthumous presence of the studio’s namesake.

Erik Nyholm was part of the Danish art movement COBRA, an acronym for the movement’s towns of origin – Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. This group of abstract expressionists was defined by a consciousness of belonging to a Danish tradition and their difference from artists from centres further south in Europe.

“Nyholm showed an unconventional approach to materials, texture and colour; always using nature as a starting point for shapes such as platters and jars but also in sculptural pieces. His works remain fresh, powerful and different. He seems to have always been curious in his attitude.”

Nature, especially the coastal environment of Australia, has always acted as inspiration for Lene. Working at the Nyholm studio, in propinquity to Denmark’s seasonal environmental changes, brought back memories of her childhood and youth and found expression in her craft, utilizing the materials at hand and the language of the studio’s namesake.

“The Erik Nyholm Ceramic Studio is a place with a lot of history. I spent time exploring new ideas and looking at new ways of making. I was inspired to use textural effects on my work and found it interesting to test and use the glazes and other materials in the studio. I tried to take in the atmosphere of a place well used and once full of activity. Erik and Janet had a thriving fish farm and 5 children!”

Erik died 17 years ago leaving his studio in the capable hands of his wife, the American potter Janet Nyholms, who has played host to numerous ceramic artists, giving potters from far and wide the opportunity to work in this unique and ‘curious’ place.

With the help of “an old potter friend” Lene successfully ‘fired up’ the old gas kiln several times during her last week at the studio, leaving some pieces in Denmark for a show in a local art gallery but bringing others back to include in this exhibition. Further pieces have been created in her home studio in Melbourne, bringing together a dramatic exhibition of works that respond to environment and place.

No exploration of environment is complete without focusing some attention on the concerns of climate change. Lene does this conceptually within her works but also practically by the purchase of carbon credits to offset the emissions created during the firing of pieces for this exhibition.

* (Bot.) of the soil; (Ecol.) produced or influenced by the soil