

BENTE SKJØTTGAARD

b. 1961, Frederiksberg, Denmark

In the ceramic sculpture of Bente Skjøttgaard, natural and scientific phenomena find expression in tendrils of clay reaching, flexing, and gesturing in tempestuously coiled combinations. These coils gather to form whip-like networks, spiral whorls, and interlocking molecular geometries. Often poised on the tips of stilt-like supports which buckle ever so slightly beneath the sculpture's weight, the works materialize the physical forces at work in three-dimensional construction: tensile strength, gravitational pull, cantilevered volumes, and the slow alchemy of minerals and glazes combining in the high-temperature crucible of the kiln.

Skjøttgaard's subjects emerge from loose, gestural coils of clay which are deliberately unglazed in places, captured *in medias res*, intentionally imperfect yet always dynamic. Frequently, Skjøttgaard's work pays homage to the turbulence of natural phenomena, whether drawing on the form of brewing storm clouds and whistling tornado funnels or considering the flagella of sea life and the matted networks of tree roots tunneling into the soil. In doing so, she foregrounds the capacity of clay to exhibit opposing ideas — strength and elasticity, density and weightlessness, impressionability and durability — in sculptures based upon the structures of cloud typologies, iterations of the bonds between carbon atoms, or in one case, formed from the imprints of the hooves of cattle grazing.

Her practice is often described in experimental terms for good reason: the variations in glaze and structure perform a trial and repetition of making. It is a way of working which reveals the restless, unrelenting face of the creative process and its pursuit of endless possibility.

Skjøttgaard attended the Kolding Design School and Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Her work has been exhibited at the Vejen Art Museum, Holstebro Kunstmuseum, Musée Fabre, and the Trapholt Art Museum. Her sculptures are in the collection of numerous institutions, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Musée National de Céramique de Sévres, the Designmuseum Danmark, and the Annie & Otto Johs. Detlefs Collection. Skjøttgaard is the recipient of awards including the Grosserer L. F. Foghts Fund, the Design Foundation Award, the Arts and Crafts Prize of 1879, and the Exhibition Award of Charlottenborg.