

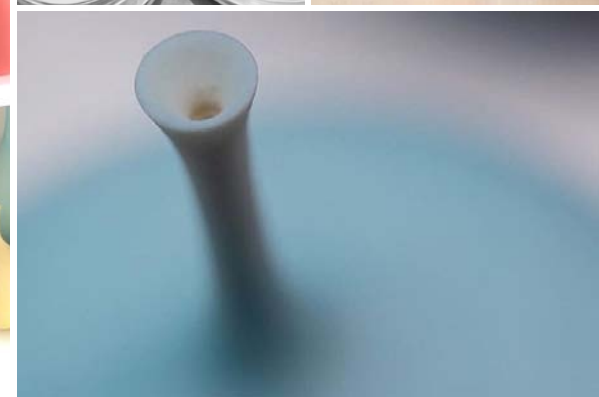
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Pod cast



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In her studio on the Suffolk coast, ceramicist Sophie Cook sculpts the most exquisitely crafted porcelain vessels in a wonderful continuum of colours and elegant designs. They are highly collectable, and their effortless beauty will soon have you going back for more.

Sophie and her family have lived out near the coast at Bawdsey since 2015, moving up from London in search of fresh air and room for growth. Her studio is set apart from the house and when I arrive, she is sitting at her potter's wheel with an uninspiring lump of porcelain clay waiting to be magically transformed into one of her sleek elegant pots. Seeing them lined up along the shelves; all different heights, shapes, colours and textures, is very impactful and they are incredibly beautiful, with an almost unearthly quality. The designs all have the characteristic long slender neck and tiny fluted opening,

and Sophie explains that the different shapes are known as bottles, pods or teardrops, with some being squatter or more bullet-like than others. They look fantastic en masse and it is not only the shapes that draw the eye, but also the colours. From the very palest blues and pastel pinks to the richest plums and deep petrol glazes, they span the spectrum and delight the senses.

Sophie did a Ceramics degree at Camberwell School of Arts in 1997, and the same year her work was 'spotted' at the New Designers Show held at the Islington



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Business Design Centre, a hotspot for upcoming talent and new creatives. This led to her work being commissioned by the highly respected Designers Guild and accepted by The Conran Shop, not a bad start for a young designer fresh out of college. "It was amazing. I don't think I appreciated at the time the huge impact it would have on my career. I didn't even have a proper studio and only by chance found space with a fellow exhibitor who had left a vague message in my comments book at the show." Over the years, Sophie has worked out of old jam factories, a converted warehouse in Rotherhithe and the Cockpit Art, an innovative incubator for talented makers looking to grow their business, before finally setting up at her home in London when her children were born.

Now she is settled in Suffolk, Sophie finds daily inspiration for her work in the beauty of her surroundings, the drama of the evening skies, the muddy greens of the North Sea and the earthy tones of the ever-changing farming landscape. Each piece is sculpted from the highest quality porcelain from Stoke on Trent, and she aims to throw 3-4 pots a day, expertly moulding the clay into her characteristic pods and teardrops, but leaving them without their fine necks until they have been allowed to dry overnight. "Once they are 'leather hard' I can then begin work perfecting the final shape and elongating the necks to precisely the right length and width. It is all about the simplicity of the shape and the exactness of the form." Sophie will then apply the colour, the pigmentations carefully mixed to her own



specification, and they are then hand sprayed. Each one is so delicate that not all are expected to survive the firing process, and indeed today, when we peep inside the kiln, one has cracked, and she is not happy with the finish on another.

Sophie's designs have evolved over the years; subtle changes to the corpulence of the shapes or the finish, but all have retained a unique quality that makes them so alluring and therefore so collectable. "Customers will often buy a mixed group as together they take on their own dynamic, the colours and textures playing off one another. However, a client from the Hamptons recently ordered sixteen identical teardrops for their home." Working with several interior designers, her work is often commissioned for installations, hotels or luxury cruise ships and private clients.



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She is part of a select portfolio sold by Maud & Mabel, a mecca for interiors in Hampstead Village, and exhibits at the prestigious Contemporary Ceramics gallery, which has been championing the best independent ceramicists for the past sixty years.

There is an ethereal quality to Sophie's work, and the longer I sit chatting the more I feel the need to reach out and touch them. They look so perfect and so elegant and their beauty still haunts me – I have the feeling I may well soon be starting my very own collection!

Open Studios: 5th-6th December.
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