

MAGAZINE

# Danish Artist Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen Crafts Improvisational Ceramics for the New Hostler Burrows Gallery

“They have a soul,” shares Pedersen of the anthropomorphic sculptures

By Hannah Martin

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“Lately I’ve been thinking about how to sculpt in a feminist way,” says the Danish artist Pernille Pontoppidan Pedersen, who has been mining the work of scholar Donna J. Haraway for inspiration. “I’m drawn to her way of playing around with new words, of looking at things and fabulating.” Pedersen is channeling that meandering, speculative approach into “Tentacular Thinking,” a solo show of freshly fired work that will inaugurate the new Tribeca outpost of the Manhattan gallery Hostler Burrows on April 28. “It matters what shapes I put together to tell a story,” says Pedersen, reflecting on her sculptural mash-ups. Unnerving, vaguely anthropomorphic forms (lips, tongues, intestines) mix with depictions of everyday objects, like tables and vases. One piece, in which a human-oid child seems to drink from a vessel, pays direct homage to Haraway with its title, *Donna’s Baby*. Working out of two converted barns in the countryside near Silkeborg, Denmark, on the outskirts of Aarhus, Pontoppidan Pedersen sculpts intuitively—mixing her own clay and manipulating it by hand, without ever sketching an idea in advance. (Some bigger pieces are made off-site in a workshop with larger kilns.) She often glazes the sculptures in their entirety, saying, “I think of it as the skin.” And indeed, she wants viewers to relate to these works as something almost human. As she says, “They have a soul.”



Soul has long been at the heart of Hostler Burrows's program. Founded by Kim Hostler and Juliet Burrows in 1998, the gallery began as a showcase for vintage Nordic furniture and decorative arts, later expanding to include contemporary makers from around the world. In recent years, the couple have intensified their gaze on Scandinavia, with a particular focus on female artists. The Tribeca gallery, named HB381 after its location at 381 Broadway, is dedicated entirely to sculpture and ceramics, making Pontoppidan Pedersen's work a perfect fit for the program. As Burrows explains, "She is not concerned with traditional ideas of beauty or perfection, but is creating work with seemingly unfettered abandon."



The artist in her countryside studio near Silkeborg, Denmark.