



# Zig zag

Ewen Henderson

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Zig zag

**Artist/Maker:** Ewen Henderson (Artist)

**Born:** 1995

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Ceramic, Mixed clays

**Technique:** Handbuilding

**Measurements:** w. 390mm

**Accession Number:** 50746

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** Britain, England

**Credit Line:** Accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by HM Government from Leslie Birks Hay and allocated to SCVA, 2016

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This commanding form made from folded paper clay is a three-dimensional landscape that combines painting, sculpture and ceramic. The form is not an archetype and provokes the viewer to look afresh. White slips are painted horizontally and stretch across the painterly surface. These guide the viewer to traverse the breadth of the form including its expansive flat surfaces and inner folds. The craggy surface appears alive, encrusted and blistering. Henderson described clay as 'fluxed earth' [1] and his sculptures capture the alchemical essence of the material. Henderson's work is often compared to the natural world and there is an elemental beauty and energy to his practice. However, his forms fiercely reject categorisation. Throughout his career he sought his work to be viewed as sculpture and for it not to be solely defined by its material.

Henderson initially trained as a painter, he studied ceramics as a mature student at Camberwell College of Art from 1965 to 1968, where his teachers included Lucie Rie and Hans Coper. His early works included interpretations of traditional forms such as tea-bowls and from the late 1970s onwards his work took on radical and larger sculptural forms (See 50744, 50745 and 50743). Ceramicist and hand-builder Henry Pim recalls his astonishment when viewing Henderson's work for the first time in 1977 and compares Henderson's forms to, '...meteorites recently arrived from another planet where no one had heard of traditional pottery techniques'. [2] Although Henderson maintained his independence from the conventions of studio ceramics, he was not alone in defying expectations and believed the work of Gordon Baldwin and Gillian Lowndes had a strong affinity with his own. [2]

Sim Panaser, August 2020

[1] David Whiting, 'Obituary: Ewen Henderson', *Guardian*, 9 October 2000, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2000/oct/09/guardianobituaries>> [accessed 12/08/2020].

[2] Henry Pim, 'Creative Games', *Ceramic Review* (No. 98 March/April 1986), 14 - 16, p. 14.

[3] Ewen Henderson curated and selected works for the 1995 Crafts Council sculptural clay exhibition, *Pandora's Box and the Tradition of Clay*, which included works by Ruth Duckworth, Dan Arbeid and Angus Suttie. Henderson chose to display his work alongside that of Gillian Lowndes and Gordon Baldwin.

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## Further Reading

Berthoud, Roger and Christopher Reid, David Whiting, Ewen Henderson, (Yeovil: Marston House in association with Midlands Arts Centre, 1995)

Birks, Tony, 'Ewen Henderson', *Revue de la Céramique et du Verre*, 117 (March/April 2001), 34-37

de Waal, Edmund, 'Ewen Henderson', *Crafts* (May/June 2001), 46-49

Pandora's Box and the Tradition of Clay, (London: Crafts Council, 1995)

Pim, Henry, 'Creative Games', Ceramic Review (No. 98 March/April 1986), 14 - 16

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