

## Jane Sawyer

Massage Series – Bowl

2002

Jane Sawyer is a mid-career studio potter based in Melbourne. Her ceramic forms are characterised by a tactile aesthetic that embodies a sense of flux and motion. Bridging the divide between sculpture and functional ware, her work dispels the boundaries between fine art, design and craft.

This large-scale, flat-based vessel belongs to Sawyer's *Massage Series* (2002). The title takes its point of departure from a production process that involves massaging and sculpting the clay body while simultaneously throwing it on a potter's wheel. Sawyer exploits the plasticity of clay to choreograph the material into an undulating mass. Here, the terracotta surface is defined by a series of expressive concentric circles, evidence of the artist's hand. A blue glaze accentuates the upper rim, cascading downwards from the finger indentations that puncture the form in place of handles.

For Sawyer, like many of her predecessors working in the medium, Japanese ceramic traditions are highly influential. Working as an apprentice under experienced potter Andrew Halford, Sawyer studied the practice of *hakame*, a gestural technique where a clay slip is freely applied. She uses this technique in *Massage Series – Bowl* (2002) to create a sense of tactility. The white kaolin slip that has been expressively applied to the vessel's terracotta body emanates a fluid sensuality.

Working since the early 1980s, Sawyer was an apprentice at the renowned Japanese Pottery Shussai Gama in Shimane, Japan, from 1985 to 1987. It was there that she learnt traditional methods of hand production and wood firing in a contemporary *Mingei* kiln that she continues to teach and practice. Today, Sawyer operates the Slow Clay Centre in Melbourne, a private school that focuses on Japanese wheel-throwing techniques. **AB**



A photograph of a person dressed as Santa Claus sitting in a forest. The person is wearing a red and white plaid shirt, blue jeans, and red and white sneakers. They are sitting on a red wooden chair. The forest floor is covered in fallen leaves, and there are many trees and branches in the background. The text "eighty years of sam." is overlaid on the top part of the image.

eighty years  
of sam.

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