

BETTY WOODMAN



Woodman's practice combined the flat medium of painting with three-dimensional ceramics. She took her first pottery class at the age of sixteen and trained as a functional potter at the School for American Craftsmen in Alfred, New York. In 1952, she visited Florence and, surrounded by what she described as piles of rubble and hope, was inspired to pursue art. Her avowed eclecticism and blurring of the distinction between fine art and craft made the art world slow to appreciate her creative talent. The influence of Italian Renaissance colours are evident, presented via methods of far-ranging periods and cultures including tin-glazed Majolica ware, Japanese Oribe ware, Chinese Tang dynasty ceramics and eighteenth-century European porcelain, and with the form of the Classical vase a recurrent motif. Collaboration with other artists, including Joyce Kozloff (p.223), encouraged Woodman to adopt a vibrant, witty style, in which she challenged the idea that ceramics are synonymous with functionality, existing merely to carry matter, as demonstrated by works such as *A Single Joy of Song*, made the year before her death. The large-scale installation combines canvas with glazed earthenware shapes to depict a theatrical domestic interior where ceramic forms enter the realm of painting.

A SINGLE JOY OF SONG

2017, glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, acrylic paint, canvas and wood, 304.8 x 711.2 x 30.5 cm (120 x 280 x 12 in)

Betty Woodman, born Elizabeth Abrahams, 1930, Norwalk, Connecticut. Died 2018, New York.