

# THE NEW YORKER

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AT THE GALLERIES



Today ceramics are respected as art, but that wasn't the case in postwar New York. Woodman, who died in 2018, emerged from that era as a pathbreaking force, embracing the long-standing craft associations of clay—its utilitarian and decorative roles—while also mining its plastic qualities to comment on developments in both painting and sculpture. This exhibition features an exhilarating abundance of Woodman's works from the nineteen-nineties. In wall-mounted pieces, such as "Balustrade Relief Vase 96-2," from 1996, vessels and abstracted architectural details are arranged as bold fragments, painted with looping vines and urn motifs in a palette of muted gaiety. The terra-cotta-colored "Conversations on the Shore," from 1994, evokes a stage set with its staggered arrangement of elements and its cleverly illusionistic combination of painted and actual negative space. Oversized ewers stand like chess pieces on the floor; on a wall behind them, a sconce-like form seems to rise like the sun. As with everything on view in this wonderful show, the installation is so gestural and so fluid that it's easy to forget that the ecstatic whole is composed of brittle parts.

— *Johanna Fateman*