

ANNE CURRIER

# ANAMORPHOSIS

by Kay Whitney



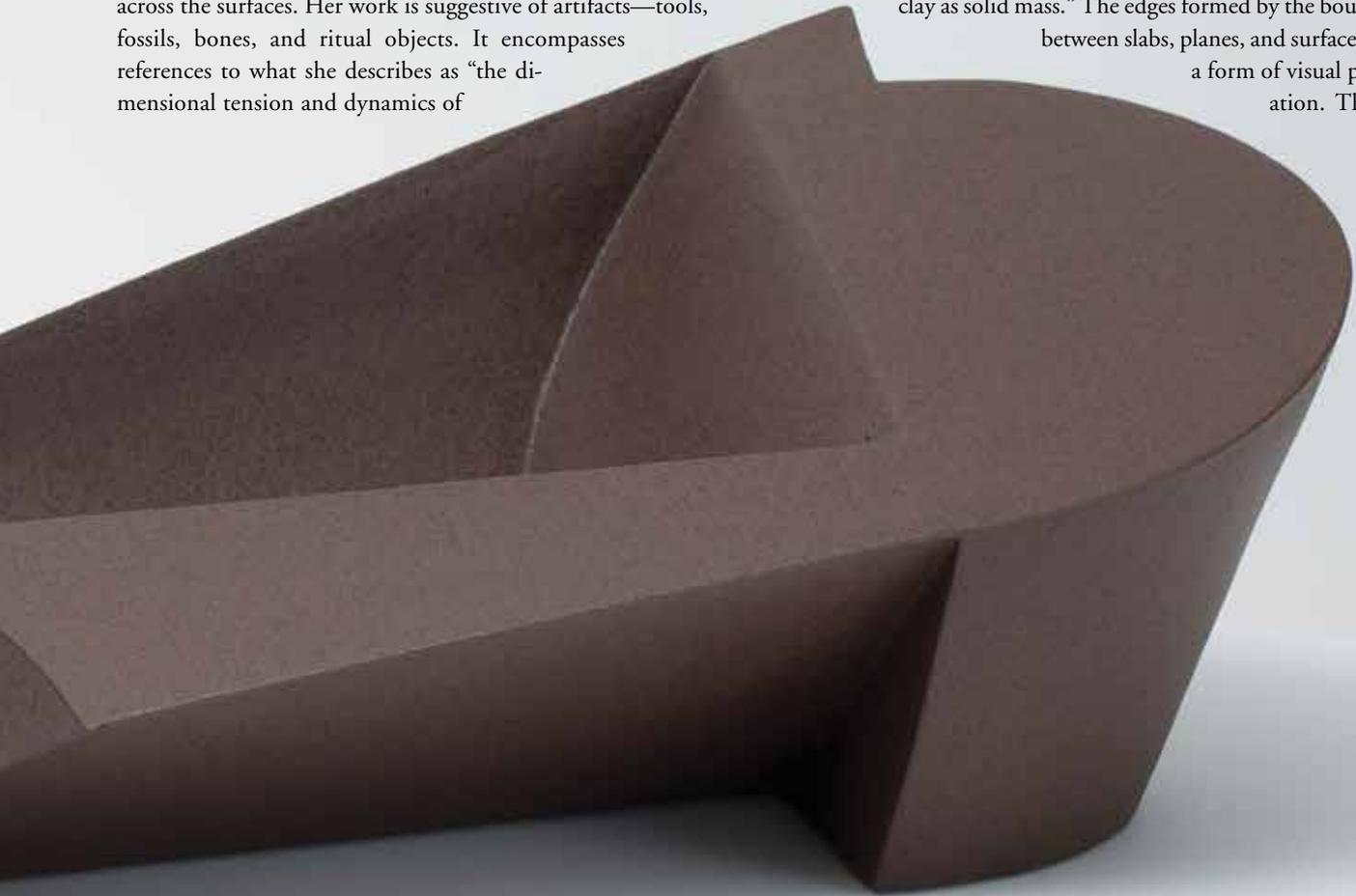
Anne Currier's work is both enigmatic and totemic, it poses questions about the relationships of subtle curves to angles and sections of circles to planes, all of which are in some subtle manner spatial and mathematical kin. Sensing the relationships, you picture the work not as a series of disparate parts but as a whole essence that strikes some Descartian geometric chord. Ultimately, Currier is critical of hard geometric volumes and predictable order. The kind of abstracted geometry she creates is eccentric, shifting, representing a uniquely poetic sensibility.

The Lacoste Gallery's ([www.lacostegallery.com](http://www.lacostegallery.com)) exhibition of Currier's work was titled, "Anamorphosis," which describes these transitional states perfectly. According to *Collins English Dictionary* the word is derived from two Greek words *anamorphoun* (to transform), and from *morphe* (form, shape). *Collins* defines it as "the evolution of one type of organism from another by a series of gradual changes." This notion of evolution and change is expressed in Currier's work by shifts between swelling or receding forms, voids, and planes, and intensified by the play of light and shadow across the surfaces. Her work is suggestive of artifacts—tools, fossils, bones, and ritual objects. It encompasses references to what she describes as "the dimensional tension and dynamics of

human figures found in Greek and Buddhist temple pediments." Her long-standing interest in the motifs of architectural terra cottas is evident in her organic, almost botanical forms. Currier's work seems located between stillness and motion, her expansive forms spring from a core reaching into space. Her sculptures, while formalist and full of certain ideas about purity and reduction, go beyond geometry into the realm of visual pleasure.

Currier makes her work by draping slabs of clay over forms using many different diameters of cardboard tubes. The work is not carved or modeled, it's assembled almost like a collage from slabs often cut with a ruler rather than knife or needle tool. The fact that the forms are hollow is important, as the projections and recessions are worked from the inside of the piece. She relates the way she fabricates her work to her beginnings as a functional potter. She's working with hollow forms, which she describes as, "more of a pottery technique, where the maker always has their hand inside of the cup to make it, to pull the walls up. . . . I never switched over, when I started making sculpture, to dealing with clay as solid mass." The edges formed by the boundaries

between slabs, planes, and surfaces create a form of visual punctuation. They are



*Anamorphosis Diptych (rust)*, 32 in. (81 cm) in length, slab-built clay, glaze, 2016.

## REVIEWS



not mathematically perfect, but as Currier says, “it has to look right; it has to have a precision that visually follows through.” The edges are where the transitions happen, where the planes shift to flat, concave, or convex, to where her use of conical forms creates an interior space. The play of light and shadow over each piece has a certain drama because of the edges and junctures; the way the glaze acts on the surfaces functions in a very specific way because of the way it breaks over the joints.

There is no symmetry in the work, and no way to take in the full object at a glance; the surfaces keep changing in unpredictable ways as you move around them, the recessions and projections push forward or pull back with their intervals of light and shadow. Because you can only see two or three sides of a piece at a time, as Currier says, “the whole scene changes because another surface has introduced itself in relationship to the others.” The legacy of Cubism is clear in these constantly changing surfaces. During an interview for the Smithsonian’s Oral History Project, Currier said, “the structural flatness and synthesis of planar shapes in Cubist still-life paintings intrigue me.” There



are many correspondences between Currier's work and that of Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, and Gaston Lachaise. What Currier admires in these artists is the way they express planes and projections and the fact that everything in their work is so exposed—there's no hiding the structure or its construction.

Currier's work is proportioned to the size of her gesture, attuned to the scale of her own body—although she has been commissioned to make large modular wall constructions, nothing in the *Anamorphosis* exhibition is bigger than 34 inches in length. Whether wall-hung or pedestal supported, each sculpture is at the scale of a domestic object with all the intimacy such objects offer. Smaller pieces such as *Anamorphosis: Pair*, *TipTop*, and *Belfast* seem particularly concentrated; their level of detail echoes that of the larger pieces; the reduced scale yields a heightened intensity. Larger pieces such as *Anamorphosis Diptych: Rust* and *Anamorphosis Diptych: Shale* invoke the second dictionary definition of anamorphosis, "an image or drawing distorted in such a way that it becomes recognizable only when viewed in a specified manner." These dark, elongated and sprawling objects resemble the distorted shadows cast by some unseen, organic object.

Because of the sinuosity of the forms, the delicate but powerful curves, angles, and hollows, the pieces are extremely tactile—you seem to feel them as you see them. This intimacy is carried over by glazes that are subtly modulated



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and rough. She applies the first layer of glaze with a sponge to the bisque-fired piece, then glaze fires it. This first surface has a soft, satin finish. For the glaze second firing, another glaze is sprayed on top of the already fired satin glaze; its finished surface is comparable to 220-grit sandpaper. The glaze colors are the subtle colors of winter in upstate New York; Currier describes them as "charcoal, slate blue/grays, deep rusts, and cool tans." These natural tones fit the forms perfectly.

*Anne Currier has been a professor in the Ceramics Department at Alfred University since 1985. In 2012, she was honored by the American Crafts Council College of Fellows as a new Fellow and award recipient for career achievement. She has received several major grants, including the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Virginia Groot Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. To learn more, visit [www.alfredceramics.com/anne-currier.html](http://www.alfredceramics.com/anne-currier.html).*

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**1** *TipTop*, 15 in. (38 cm) in length, slab-built clay, glaze, 2015. **2** *Anamorphosis Diptych (Shale)*, 31 in. (79 cm) in length, slab-built clay, glaze, 2016. **3** *Anamorphosis Pair*, 19 in. (48 cm) in length, slab-built clay, glaze, 2016. **4** *Anamorphosis Channel*, 22 in. (56 cm) in height, slab-built clay, glaze, 2016.



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