



Wayne Ngan, *Yellow Vase with Lugs*, 2016, *Rust Coloured Vase*, 2017, *Yukon Black Jar with Geometric Lugs*, c. 2000s, *Thin Vase with Cast Iron Glaze*, 2014, *White Vase*, 2016.

48 WALKER ST, VIEWING ROOM | SEP 5 – OCT 4, 2025

# Wayne Ngan

## *Spirit and Form*

James Cohan is pleased to present Wayne Ngan: *Spirit and Form*, on view in the gallery's 48 Walker Street viewing room from September 5 through October 4, 2025. The gallery will host an opening reception on Friday, September 5, from 6-8 PM.

Wayne Ngan (b.1937 Guangdong, China - d.2020 Hornby Island, BC, Canada) is recognized as one of Canada's premier ceramic artists. Ngan's lengthy career spanned over six decades. At the age of thirteen, Ngan experienced a destabilizing move from Guangdong, China to a vastly different British Columbia, Canada. Ngan was determined to make a name for himself as an artist despite challenging circumstances and familial expectations. His practice drew influence from traditional Chinese, Korean, and Japanese pottery, as well as Modernist painting, pre-Columbian and ancient Egyptian art. Ngan's extensive knowledge of these historic precedents and his connection to the natural beauty of Canada's Hornby Island informed his abstract sculptural forms. Wayne Ngan: *Spirit and Form* spotlights a selection of cornerstone works, created in the 1990s and the last decade of the artist's life.

Inspired by the back-to-the-land movement, popularized in the 1960s and 70s, Ngan centered his life and artistic practice around a harmonious relationship with the environment anchored in self-sufficiency. Ngan sourced natural materials both to build his home and studio on Hornby Island, and also to fuel his artmaking, experimenting with creating various glazes from clay like Yukon black, a deep noir glaze with high shine. Ngan was committed to exploring process, using the wealth of knowledge he gained from his regular travels to China and Japan as well as independent research to refine techniques such as raku, hakeme (coarse brush decoration), and salt glazing. Ngan built his forms by throwing and altering pieces of clay, then sculpting them together. He would occasionally fashion elements that extend outwards and generate curvilinear, spouted openings in others. Here, elegantly elongated vessels in earth tones are in dialogue with compact lidded forms, which seem to contain the energy Ngan expended to render them. Their surfaces are varied – ranging from textural and patterned to slick and smooth. According to Ngan, “There are two ways of looking at pots: one is the actual clay pot, but the real pot to me is all around me—the spirit of the pot.”

Through his work in clay, Ngan fused East and West, the past and the present, collapsing disparate chronologies and geographies into intimate, evocative objects.

Wayne Ngan studied at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, formerly the Vancouver School of Art. The influential teachings of British potter Bernard Leach and Soetsu Yanagi, founder of the Mingei, a Japanese folk art movement (prioritizing beauty in the everyday) resonated strongly with ceramic artists in British Columbia, including Wayne Ngan. In 1967, Ngan settled on Hornby Island, where he lived and worked until his passing in 2020.

Ngan’s work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions since the 1960s at venues including the Vancouver Art Gallery; the National Gallery of Canada; the Gardiner Museum, Toronto; Hanart Art Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York; the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; The Apartment in Vancouver; and the American Crafts Museum, Concord, Massachusetts, among others. Ngan’s ceramics are in notable public collections such as the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Montréal Museum of Fine Art, the Gardiner Museum, the National Palace Museum (Taipei, Taiwan), the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

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