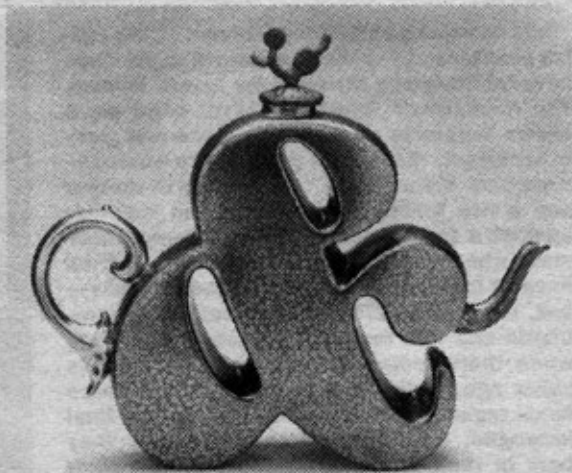


CALENDAR

ART PICKS OF THE WEEK

ADRIAN SAXE, JAN de SWART

Adrian Saxe is something of an anomaly amongst local ceramicists. A maker of magical meta-vessels festooned with the unlikeliest of gewgaws and figurines, you'd think the Glendale-born artist was an old-line Bay Area Funkster. Saxe cannot abide by a straight line, it would seem; his pots, radiant with luster, bulge and swoon voluptuously and sport incongruous but similarly curvaceous and elaborate attachments — many not even clay. Some of Saxe's pot-things assume a bristly mock nastiness, undercut with a wink, while others feign erudition by assuming the shape of letters and even punctuation. If Saxe's objects were



Untitled Ewer (Fatface Bold Ampersand), 1989, by Adrian

people, they'd be perfect lovers: they're gorgeous, funny, brilliant, a little bit outré and, beneath it all, sweet. Mirroring Saxe's sensibility, the LACMA retrospective is intimate and crowded, forcing you up close to the vitrines and into the delicious details.

The often-charming details beckon in Jan de Swart's objects as well — and, like Saxe's, the creations of the late woodworker conflate fine and functional art and brim with curves and arabesques. They brim with all sorts of peculiar allusions, too, but these are somewhat more ominous than Saxe's. The Dutch emigré's sculpture-furniture is inflected with overtones not only of ritual and eros, but of morbidity and even cruelty. His upbringing in a Trappist-run orphanage may account for some of this (the shape of a bishop's miter recurs in several works, including *The Confessional*); it's safest to say simply that de Swart, liberated formally by the American West, still bore the weight of European civilization in his soul. For all that, he was at least as much a stylistic loner in Lalaland as Saxe is, and his posthumous rediscovery is as welcome as it is inevitable. The gallery show consists almost entirely of large items made in the 1960s and '70s, rarely before seen outside de Swart's Eagle Rock house-studio.

Adrian Saxe at LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd.; thru Jan. 30. Jan de Swart at Louis Newman, 322 N. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills; thru Jan. 27.

—Peter Frank