
PAGODA RED



"CARESS OF WATER" MEMORY JUG BY MICHAEL THOMPSON

\$8,000

2024 • United States • Ceramic, Porcelain, Stoneware • Collection #CMT259

W: 19.0" D: 18.0" H: 13.0"

Based in Chicago, IL, contemporary artist Michael Thompson creates unique kites, collages and mixed media works assembled from material fragments of past and present collected in his travels. In his ongoing series of memory jugs, Thompson adorns stoneware vessels with a kaleidoscope of ceramic shards, found objects, and pocket-sized trinkets he collected over the course of his life.

Also known as forget-me-not jugs or spirit jars, memory jugs are African American folk art objects that honor a loved one who has recently passed. Continued...



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Small tokens and mementos of the deceased are gathered and affixed to the exterior of a jug or vase, an abundance of memories that celebrates a life lived to the fullest.

Michael Thompson applies this tradition to his own practice, creating tactile assemblages of this and that. Formed in the manner of collage, each jug honors the lost memories of generations past and his own memories of personally discovering each item. With varied sources for materials including Kyoto, Turkey, and Mexico, a great number of the found shards are 18th and 19th century ceramics Thompson gathered from the Thames River at low tide in a practice known as "mudlarking."

Fragments of blue-and-white porcelain swirl in currents around the base of this large earthenware jar entitled "Caress of Water," swelling and receding like the churning tides. Ceramic figurines, serveware, and objets d'art merge and fuse into waves of bold blue color, each glazed in the style of Chinese export, majolica, talavera and chinoiserie wares. To form the collage, well-placed shards are plastered to the side of a found jug with mottled brown glaze. The jar itself is brushed with a blue floral motif and marked by a repaired hairline crack, preserved in the spirit of collage or kintsugi. The amalgam of forms that comprise the jug's relief achieves a continuous, amorphous surface texture, contrasted - upon closer inspection - by the delicate, ornate details of the individual fragments.

"Caress of Water," 2024

Michael Thompson

Porcelain shards and found objects on stoneware vessel.

