

T Suggests: Painterly Ceramics, Grateful Dead Body Oils and More

A roundup of things our editors — and a few contributors — are excited about in a given week.



Oliver Beer's "Vessel Orchestra" (2019).
© Oliver Beer, courtesy of the artist and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac



A storage jar decorated with mountain goats, circa 3800–3700 B.C. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The Met's Most Musical Objects

To create his latest work, titled "Vessel Orchestra," the British artist Oliver Beer carefully selected 32 artworks, utilitarian tools and decorative pieces from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's permanent collection, based primarily on their acoustic qualities.

When the installation opens at the Met Breuer on July 2, the objects — which include both a 7,000-year-old Persian ceramic storage jar painted with mountain goats and Ettore Sottsass's penis-shaped 1973 pink vase "Shiva" — will function as amplifiers. A microphone housed inside each piece will connect to a keyboard, which, through an internal feedback loop, will generate sound, filling the museum's top floor with music.

The work is both the first audio-based installation commissioned by the museum and Beer's first institutional solo show in New York. The artist, who exhibited objects from his own family in a similar installation at Paris's Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in January, upends the primacy of vision in art, turning decorative objects into agents for sound. "Approaching the collection from a musical standpoint meant I could only choose objects that would create a musical composition together," explains Beer. "Aesthetic concerns all of a sudden became secondary after the objects' innate musicalities." To amplify the diverse styles of the works — which also include an ornate silver-plated ewer by the 18th-century British manufacturer Franchi and Son and a gilded Qing-dynasty-era porcelain vase — Beer has invited a wide-ranging selection of musicians, such as the Beirut-based band Mashrou' Leila and the artist collective Brooklyn Raga Massive, to "play" the installation in varied genres every Friday evening throughout the summer. He hopes that these activations in diverse musical styles will foreground different chapters in the history of each piece: "The potential sounds within the objects haven't changed throughout time while passing hands; however, each concert will speak to a different history in the musicians' hands." *"Vessel Orchestra" will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from July 2 through Aug. 11, 2019, metmuseum.org — OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN*