

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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EDMUND DE WAAL: *Atemwende*

Thursday, September 12–Saturday, October 19, 2013
Opening reception: Thursday, September 12th, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

I've been thinking about new ways to make pauses, spaces and silences, where breath is held inside and between each vessel, between the objects and the vitrines, the vitrines and the room. In working with the vessel, working with porcelain, and with colors that express the great history of Oriental ceramics, but also the colors of modernism and minimalism; this seems to be enough material to be getting on with.

—Edmund de Waal

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce new work by Edmund de Waal. This is his first exhibition with the gallery.

Atemwende comprises a series of vitrines containing thrown porcelain vessels arranged in specific groupings. From simple pairs of pots to complex multitudes in their hundreds, these minimalist dichotomies in black and white suggest the sequences and patterns of a musical score, while titles cite the poetry of Paul Celan, Wallace Stevens and others.

De Waal's art speaks to his enduring fascination with the nature of objects and the attendant history of their collection and display. His poignant memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) is a family biography whose recurring motif through five generations is a large collection of *netsuke*. A potter since childhood and an acclaimed writer, de Waal's studies of the history of ceramics have taken him from ancient Japan to late modernism. Confronting European and Asian traditions of intimate craftsmanship with the scale and sequence of minimalist art and music, his new ensembles evoke at once the delicate measure of Agnes Martin's sublime abstract paintings, and the rhythmic pulses of the music of Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

De Waal's desire to transcend utilitarian pottery was evident in his transition during the 1980s from clay to more refined porcelain, a medium that demands acute focus of mind and eye as well as a swift hand. A new audacity is expressed in the sheer number of pots and their arrangement. Impact is achieved through scale and multiplicity, yet the subtle iterations of the handmade process are maintained.

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The exhibition title derives from Paul Celan's 1967 poetry collection *Atemwende* ("breathturn"), a term that the poet equates with the moment when words transcend literal meaning. Set in series and sequences, the pots possess their own evocative power, appearing as characters that touch and huddle, or face isolation. Each of the four large vitrines, *breathturn I-IV* (all works 2013), holds hundreds of pots, while individual objects and smaller clusters sit within wall-mounted boxes, girders, and brackets (*black field I-III* and *I am their music*), evoking the ascetic constructions of Donald Judd and Giorgio Morandi's communities of everyday vessels on canvas. By setting intimate handmade works in fabricated aluminum vitrines, de Waal produces a formal tension between tradition and innovation that imbues the mastery of an ancient medium with a bold new narrative.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Adam Gopnik.

Edmund de Waal was born in Nottingham, United Kingdom in 1964, and lives and works in London. His work has been shown and collected by museums throughout the world, including Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; and Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Recent solo museum exhibitions include "Edmund de Waal," Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Cambridge (2007); "Edmund de Waal: Signs & Wonders," Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2009); and "Edmund de Waal at Waddesdon," Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom (2012). His acclaimed memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* was the winner of the Costa Biography Award in 2010 and is an international best-seller.

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Image: EDMUND DE WAAL, *breathturn I* (detail), 2013, 476 porcelain vessels, aluminium and plexiglass cabinet, 90 3/8 x 118 1/8 x 3 15/16 inches (229.6 x 300 x 10 cm), photograph by Mike Bruce © Edmund de Waal

Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.

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