

# The New York Times

## T MAGAZINE

### A Shortlist of What We Like Right Now

Gravity-defying furniture, performance art in the East Village, totes for travel and more.

Oct. 31, 2017



From far left: Mason's "Folded Cross, White" (2016); "Folded Spear, Cobalt" (2015); a portrait of the artist in his L.A. studio in 2007.  
From far left: courtesy of the artist and Albertz Benda (2); Roxanne Morganti

#### Earth Meets Fire

Born in Nebraska and raised on a ranch east of Reno, Nev., John Mason arrived in Los Angeles in 1949 curious about ceramics, a discipline that was then largely dismissed as a craft rather than a fine art. But Mason wasn't deterred: He trained at the Otis and Chouinard art institutes under master ceramists Susan Peterson and Peter Voukos, and Hirsch, Liz. "As Shortlist of What We Like Right Now: Earth Meets Fire," T Magazine. October 31, 2017

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was among the first artists to show at L.A.'s now-iconic Ferus Gallery, known for championing art that bridged the gap between high and low. (Warhol's soup cans debuted there in 1962, as did John Altoon's lyrical, quasi-Abstract Expressionist "Ocean Park" paintings.) In the decades since, the now-90-year-old Mason has become renowned for his simple geometric forms (spears, crosses and torqued pillars), which he fires in a room-size kiln in his downtown L.A. studio. An [upcoming solo show at Albertz Benda gallery](#) in N.Y.C. will highlight some of his towering columnar works, along with more intimately proportioned, pedestal-friendly sculptures, most of them never previously seen. Some unfold vertically like the gills of an accordion, swiveling effortlessly up from their bases; others stand stoically, their smooth surfaces defined by crisp edges. Glazed in rich, earthy hues like turquoise and burnt umber, they are arresting reminders of an artist who superseded the technical limits of clay — as well as the superficial opposition of art and craft, paving the way for later artists such as Sterling Ruby and Brie Ruais. — LIZ HIRSCH

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