

Artist's Statement: Danaid Series (2004-2011)

When I began this body of work, I was thinking about the female body and its miraculous function as a vessel. A vessel of contradiction, perhaps: able to contain and carry another being, another body, while containing the woman herself. Able to release into the world the being that is carried, and still remain full. I wanted to capture this paradox in clay: the vessel that is perpetually full, even when empty.

These vessels are profoundly feminine in form and surface. As I worked with the form, I began to explore ideas of female eroticism. My passion for textiles and the rich silks of India informed my choice of surfaces. This, and the attraction of simultaneously concealing and revealing the beauty of the form of the vessels I was building led me to open the surfaces more and more, moving from molded slabs to a weaving technique, as though of a tapestry. That this tapestry is hard and strong as vitrified clay furthers the contradictions, allowing me to capture the vulnerable beauty of the immense strength of fragility, the resilience of softness. That we can contain more, the more open we become, is a contradiction at the heart of human nature. As I worked, I recollected the myth of the Danaïds: the king's daughters whose task is to try to fill their vessels to the brim with only a sieve to dip in the river. I thought, too, of how the Vestal Virgins were said to demonstrate their divine spirituality, and their chasteness, by carrying water in a bored jar. This paradox of simultaneous presence and absence, and the strong pull toward this mystery, is part of both spiritual seeking and physical desire. The vessels in the body of work I have called Danaïds express my attraction to both.