

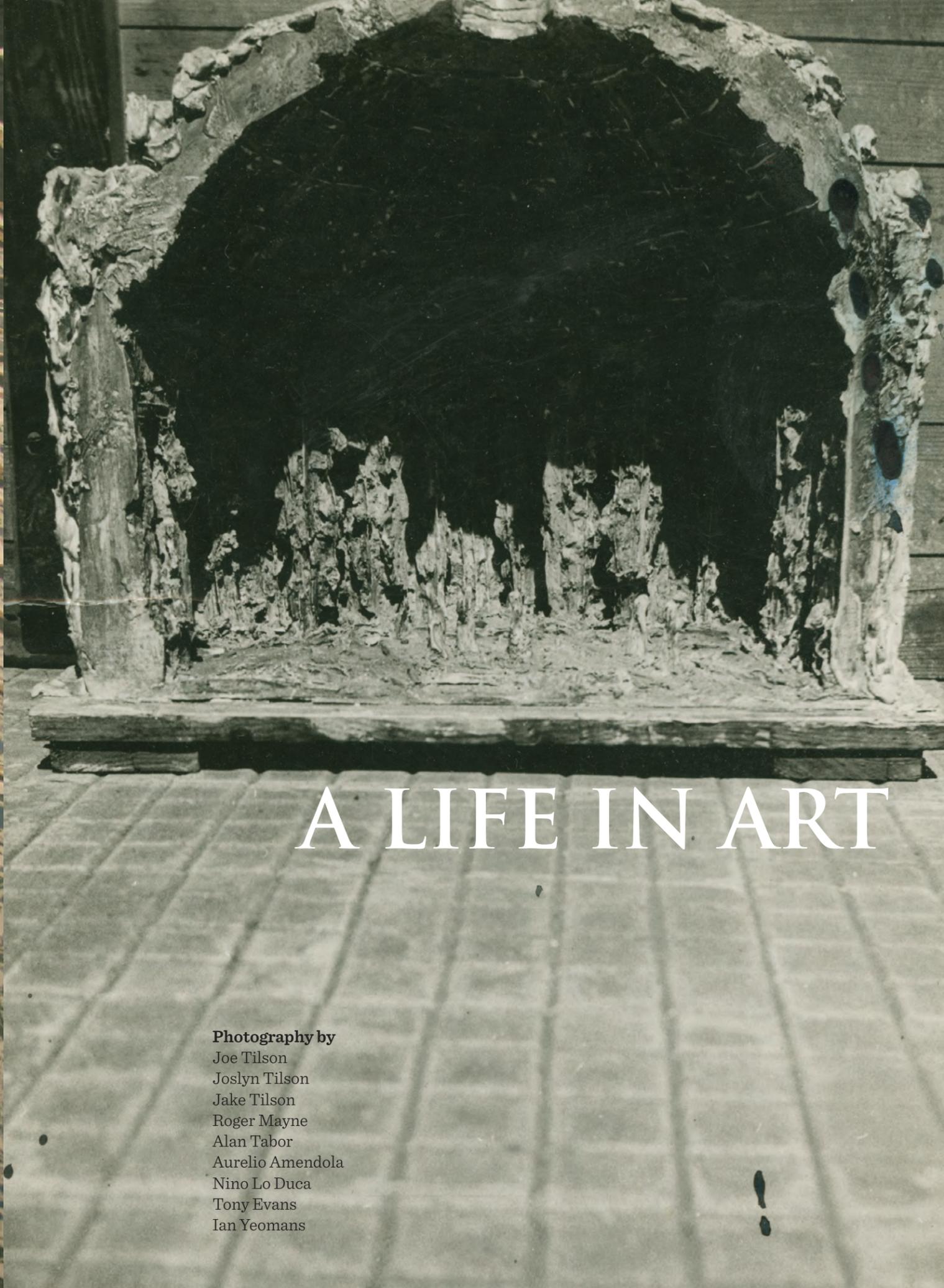
JOS

A LIFE IN ART



JOSLYN TILSON





# A LIFE IN ART

**Photography by**  
Joe Tilson  
Joslyn Tilson  
Jake Tilson  
Roger Mayne  
Alan Tabor  
Aurelio Amendola  
Nino Lo Duca  
Tony Evans  
Ian Yeomans

## Dedication

For Jos from Joe, with love



## Further reading

### Catalogues and books

*Weavings of Venice*, Bugno Art Gallery, Venice, 2015.

Mauro Civai, *Bianco e Nero a Colori*, Palazzo Pubblico, 1999.

Annabel Freyberg, *Terracotta and Weavings*, Galerie Besson, 2010.

Jake Tilson, *Jos Tilson Family Food*, Atlas, 2009, ISBN 0 907508 42 1, a facsimile of Jos's kitchen recipe book. Handwritten and annotated.

### Family books

*The Sterlings of Stirlingshire, Ireland and London 1500-1935*, The Curwen Press, London 1935. Portraits and family trees.

William W. Morton, *Alexander Morton 1844 - 1923*, Victoria & Albert Museum, Kilmarnock Standard Ltd, 1960.

Jocelyn Morton, *Three Generations in a Family Textile Firm*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

Lesley Jackson, *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers: Visionary Textiles and Modern Art*, V&A Publishing, 2012.

Richard Calvocoressi, *Alastair Morton 1910-1963*, The Fine Art Society plc, London, 2006.

Michael Compton, Marco Livingstone, *Tilson* (Joe), Thames & Hudson, 1994.

Jake Tilson, *A Tale of 12 Kitchens: Family Cooking in Four Countries*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson (UK), Artisan Books (USA) 2006.

Jake Tilson, *In at the Deep End: Cooking Fish Venice to Tokyo*, Quadrille (UK), Lyons Press (USA), Spain, Germany.

### Audio archive and films

Joslyn Tilson interviewed by Melanie Roberts. *National Life Stories: Artists’ Lives, British Library. Artists’ Lives* C466: British Library shelfmark: C466/153/01-05. *The Sound and Moving Image catalogue*: http://sami.bl.uk

*Joe Tilson, Monitor*, BBC TV, 1964, duration: 14.34 minutes.

*Joe Tilson, Private Landscapes*, BBC TV, 1976, duration: 29.45 minutes.

## Exhibitions

1988 First solo exhibition at Berkeley Square Gallery, London

1989 Berkeley Square Gallery, London

Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth

1990 Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth

1991 Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth

1992 *Christmas Exhibition*, Galerie Besson, London

1993 Berkeley Square Gallery, London

1994 Berkeley Square Gallery; 20th Century British Art Fair, Royal College of Art

1995 *New Work*, Berkeley Square Gallery, London

1996 *ARTS96*, Islington, London

1998 *Ceramics from Tuscany*, Berkeley Square Gallery, London

1999 *Bianco e Nero a Colori, Black and White in Colours*, Siena, Palazzo Pubblico

2000 *Works in Terracotta 1994-2000*, Berkeley Square Gallery

2002 *Works in Terracotta 1986-2002*, Berkeley Square Gallery

2007 *Italian Terracottas*, Galerie Besson, London

2010 *Terracottas and Weavings*, Galerie Besson, London

2015 *Weavings of Venice*, Bugno Gallery, Venice, curated by Enzo Di Martino

2017 *Christmas Exhibition*, Piers Feetham Gallery, London

## Written and designed by

Jake Tilson



## Jos Tilson: Some threads through a life of constant creation

## Marco Livingstone

Allow me the indulgence of writing here in a much more personal voice than I would normally speak in for an art historical text. I have been fortunate to have Jos Tilson as a friend for over thirty years and first came across her work at that time, immediately buying two of her ceramic sculptures when I saw them exhibited at the Berkeley Square Gallery in London. Having known her husband Joe’s work for almost two decades by then, I was taken aback not only by the completeness of her own vision but also by the dialogue between the interests she expressed in clay in her hand-made objects and those being explored by him in his paintings, sculptures, drawings and editioned prints. In retrospect I should not have been surprised that she had kept so quiet about her own formidable artistic achievements, such is her modesty and humility. And yet it is precisely those qualities that bear such spectacular fruit in her art, which is shaped by perceptive sideways glances at the world around her – especially in Tuscany and Venice, where she and Joe have spent months of every year since the late 1960s – and by a highly poetic and subtle sensibility.

Favouring earth colours, deceptively simple but decoratively opulent patterns and a hugely inventive variety of forms that echo historic prototypes rooted in the Renaissance and the pre-Renaissance and much further back in ancient civilisations, Jos has steadfastly produced art that is highly personal and unequivocally of its time but also timeless, of the ages. Whether conceiving of her pots (themselves made of earth) as vessels expressive of ancient conventions and longstanding human purposes, or as hand-held interpretations of the Venetian streets and bridges or architectural forms studied with such attentiveness on daily walks during her Italian sojourns, she succeeds repeatedly in producing objects that convey her love of daily rituals and of the cultural achievements of generation upon generation.

Jos’s return in recent years to hand-weaving on an even more intimate scale than she had favoured in her pots has been an equally stunning revelation. Early this summer I was privileged to study some of these at first-hand on the wall of their kitchen in Venice – to call this domestic environment a studio would seem too pretentious – just after walking with them along the pavements of their neighbourhood of Dorsoduro. I make no apology for writing about Jos’s art in such a conversational style, as those are among the qualities that I most admire about the work itself. Like her husband, she expresses huge affection and understanding in her art for what John Ruskin called ‘the stones of Venice’, for the worn

pavements, the welcoming doorways and the pleasing structures of the city’s ecclesiastical and domestic architecture. A sight as simple as the stepped bridges vaulting the narrow canals of their district becomes a trigger for the weaving of threads that themselves speak of ancient traditions, materials and quotidian ceremonies. Jos’s ability to extract memorable shapes and images from such apparently simple means, and to express with such eloquence her loving response to the sights that inspire her, is a thing of wonder. One thing I have long known about her is that she is an avid, indeed a voracious, reader. But seeing her life’s work gathered together in the pages of this book, a tribute from her immediate family, makes me aware of the extent to which even I had underestimated the genuine poetry of her art in its various manifestations.

Jos’s great talent lies above all in her ability to extract the essence of the visual sensations that lie at the core of every object she makes, but also in the deliciously sensual tactility of her handling of materials, whether soft or hard. Her chosen mediums – clay and cloth – might be thought of as quintessentially feminine, or as associated with ‘women’s work’, but she deals with them robustly and with a consciousness of the link with her family history and particularly with the work of her father, Alastair Morton, and the family firm, the Edinburgh Weavers. One’s impulse on seeing any of her inventions is to touch them, to feel the materiality of their surfaces, whether literally by holding them or perceptually by viewing them at a respectful distance. Confronted by her objects, one is constantly reminded that they have been shaped lovingly not just by hand, but specifically by *her* hands. Each one, on being contemplated, becomes a physical trace or memento of her own presence, a gesture of friendship and consolation, a loving embrace. It is almost embarrassing to say these things about it, so deeply do these qualities resist the characteristics that we have been taught to admire as signifiers of ambition in the art of our time. Yet in a period increasingly dominated, in art as in political life, by bombast, heavy-handedness and exaggeration, the subdued and caressing touch of Jos’s art is to be cherished and celebrated.

The Tilsons’ old friend Howard Hodgkin titled a painting of 1983-5 *A Small Thing but my Own*. That phrase could just as pertinently describe Jos’s ceramics and weavings, so low-key and undemonstrative but so full of heart and pictorial and sculptural intelligence. I feel like shouting her praises from the rooftops, but whispered confidences will do for now in respectful homage to an artist who has quietly, and with a dignified modesty, taught us how to appreciate the world and to savour the taste of the most fleeting experience.



1938 - picnicing in Cumberland with Alastair Morton, Joslyn Morton and her brother Alec Morton  
Brackenfell in Brampton, Cumbria was the family home, designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight for Alastair Morton in 1937. Photo: RIBA archives, 1937



1943 - Summer in Connecticut, Alec, Flavia, Rachel, Jos and Meg the dog  
Left. Jos in South Orange, 1941  
Right. Jos in South Orange, 1942

Jos was born in 1934 in Edinburgh, the daughter of Flavia Birrell and Alastair Morton.

Alastair Morton worked at Edinburgh Weavers, part of the family firm Morton Sundour Fabrics. The business was three generations old, begun by his grandfather Alexander Morton (1844-1923), founder of Alexander Morton & Company. His father, James Morton (1867-1943), created Sundour dyes and Edinburgh Weavers which Alastair took charge of age 21 in 1931, the year he married Flavia. The firm had used works by artists such as William Morris and Voysey as designs for furnishing fabrics. Under Alastair other artists became involved such as Paul Nash, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. Alastair was also a constructivist painter, exhibiting in group exhibitions during his life and more extensively after his death in 1963.

Jos has two siblings; Alec was two years older and Rachel was four years younger. At first they lived in a house in Carlisle, Cumberland. In 1936 as a response to a growing family and the need for a studio Alastair commissioned a modernist house designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, who later worked on the Festival of Britain. The house was called Brackenfell and sat atop a hill in Brampton in Cumberland, named due to its wild outlook. At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 the family were worried that the house might become a target for German bombers so Flavia and the three children evacuated to North America. They lived in a small third floor apartment on South Orange Avenue in South Orange, Newark, New Jersey where they stayed for most of the war. By coincidence Howard Hodgkin was on the same boat taking them all back across the Atlantic to Portugal towards the end of the war. Ironically their return to London coincided with the beginning of the V1 rocket attacks.

The family lived in Cumberland for a year where Jos attended the Annisgarth boarding school in Ambleside. After Flavia and Alastair divorced in 1944 she took the children to a house in Bishopthorpe, York where Jos went to York College for Girls and then The Mount, a Quaker school, until she was 17.



After leaving school Jos considered studying history at the University of Edinburgh but her father suggested art school as an alternative.

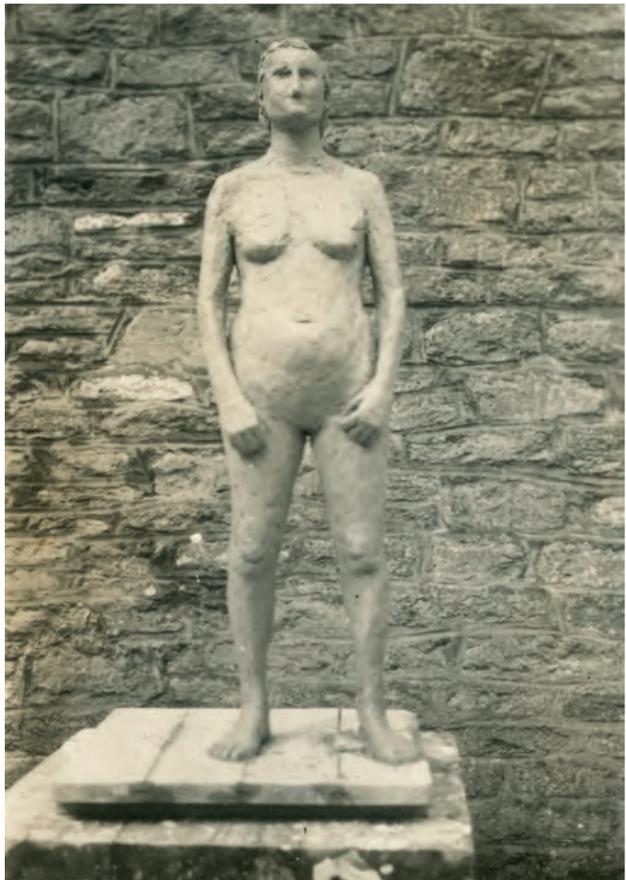
Jos found herself attracted to Corsham in Wiltshire, at that time the staff included influential artists such as; William Scott, Peter Lanyon, Kenneth Armitage, Bernard Meadows, James Tower and William Glock. As seen from this list other arts such as pottery, poetry and music were of equal importance. So Jos moved south in 1951 to Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. A one year foundation in painting, sculpture, ceramics and music was followed by two years of art teacher-training, which still retained a strong practical element. The course included teaching in a local school.

*Seated Figure*, 1954, plaster, 35.5 cm,  
Bath Academy of Art, Corsham

*Reclining figure*, 1955, cement, concrete, 2/3 life size,  
Bath Academy of Art, Corsham



*Seated figure*, 1954, wax, 20 cm high,  
Bath Academy of Art, Corsham



After three years Jos was offered an additional year at Corsham to concentrate on sculpture.

She was then awarded an Italian Government travelling scholarship to study sculpture under Marino Marini at the Brera in Milan. Jos ended up living with Hazel and Michele Ranchetti who became life long friends. With the help of the British Council Jos transferred to the British School in Rome in 1955 where she met Joe Tilson. She also developed an addiction to Italian architecture, making sculptures of the Pantheon and Piazza San Marco. During the year Bernard Cohen visited the school. To help pay her way Jos worked for the British School in the archaeology department where she studied ordnance survey maps of Italy looking for Etruscan sites.

*Brooch*, 1953, bronze, 6 cm approx

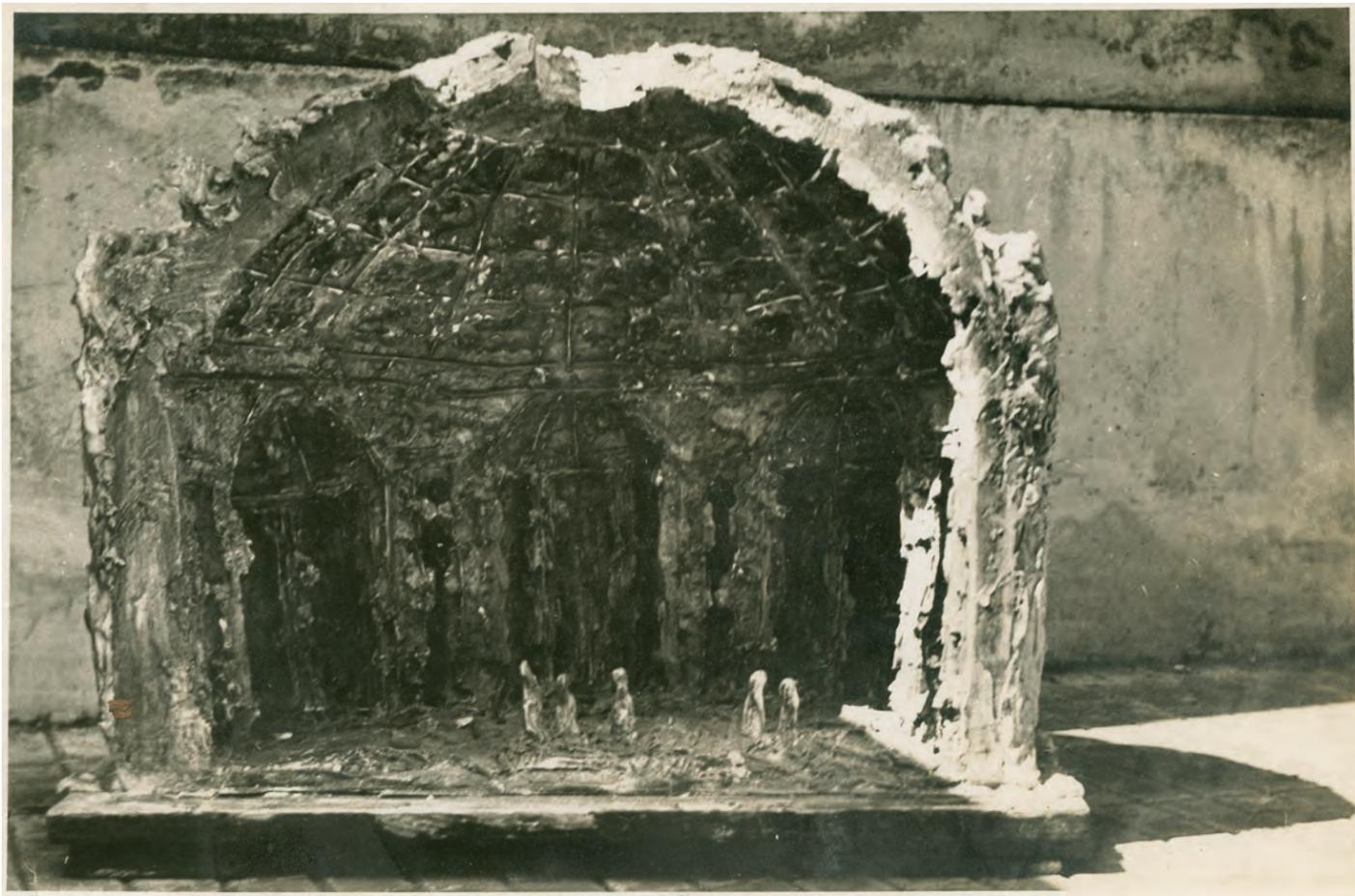
*Brooch*, 1953, bronze, 13 x 7 cm

*Seated figure*, summer term, bronze or terracotta, 30 cm, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham

*Standing figure*, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham

OPPOSITE: *Seated figure*, autumn term, plaster, life size, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham





OPPOSITE: *Pantheon, Rome*, 1956, plaster, 61 cm high  
ABOVE: *Piazza san Marco, Venice*, 1956, plaster, 22 x 23 x 15 cm

In Spring 1956 Jos and Joe travelled south from Rome on a Lambretta scooter to Cefalù in Sicily.

Joe had been there in 1949-50 and wanted to show Jos the Byzantine mosaics. They had a house by the sea in Cefalù for three months where they worked on painting and sculpture.

OPPOSITE TOP: 1956 - Jos working on a wax sculpture of a cockeral in Cefalù, Sicily



In 1956 Joe and Jos were married in Venice at the town hall.

They lived for a while in Casa Frolo on Giudecca where Joe had a studio. After three months they returned to Rome and set off again on their scooter to L'Ametlla de Mar in Spain. They found a hut in an olive grove where they slept on straw and worked during the day. A suspicious policeman visited each day to check on them, his brother taught Jos how to cook paella and other Spanish dishes. The only book they owned was Elizabeth David's *Italian Food*. During their stay Peter Blake visited.



At the end of their scholarships in 1957 they moved back to London, to an ex-dairy on Lonsdale Road in Notting Hill Gate – a poor neighbourhood at the time. Their son, Jake, was born in 1958. A year later they moved to Argyll Road where Anna was born in 1959 and Sophy in 1965.



OPPOSITE TOP: 1957, L'Ametlla de Mar, Jos  
L'Ametlla de Mar, Joe  
L'Ametlla de Mar, Peter Blake, Jos  
1956 - Joe and Jos getting married in Venice  
Jos in Arsenale, Venice

ABOVE: 1958 - Jos in a one-room flat  
in a disused Victorian dairy shop on  
Lonsdale Road, Notting Hill Gate  
BOTTOM: Outside view with neighbor and  
Lambretta scooter





TOP: 1965 - Open-plan living, Argyll Road. Photograph Ian Yeomans for The Sunday Times Magazine

OPPOSITE L: 1959 - Joe, Jake and Jos in the basement flat of Argyll Road. Photo: Roger Mayne. Flavia Morton lived upstairs. When Anna was born the house reversed and Flavia lived in the flat

OPPOSITE R: 1967 - Jos, Sophy and Jake outside 11, Argyll Road.

1961 - back garden of Argyll Road in the snow

1964 - Joe, Jos, Jake, Anna, outside the British Pavillion at the Venice Biennale



As well as bringing up the children Jos also started designing jewellery and neck-ties in 1967-68 which she had manufactured and sold in shops in fashionable Carnaby Street.

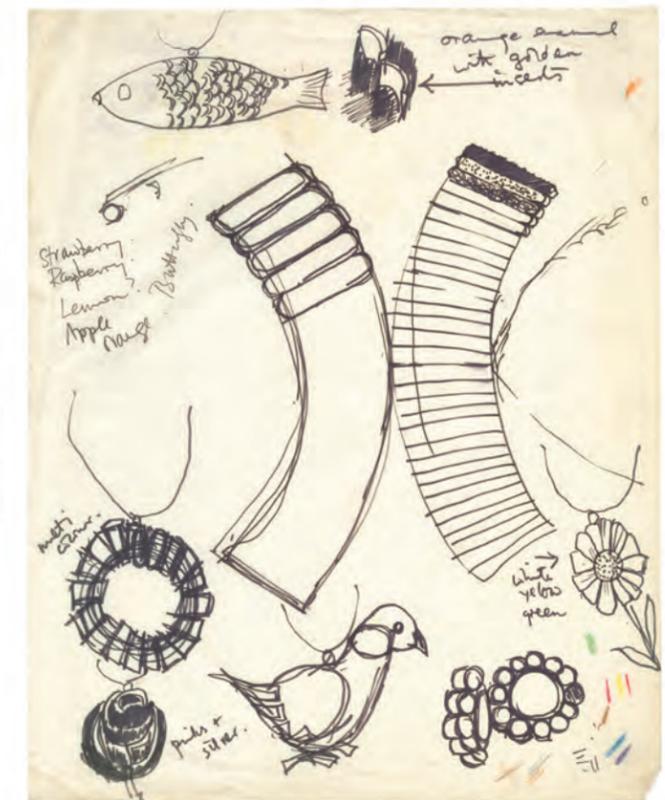
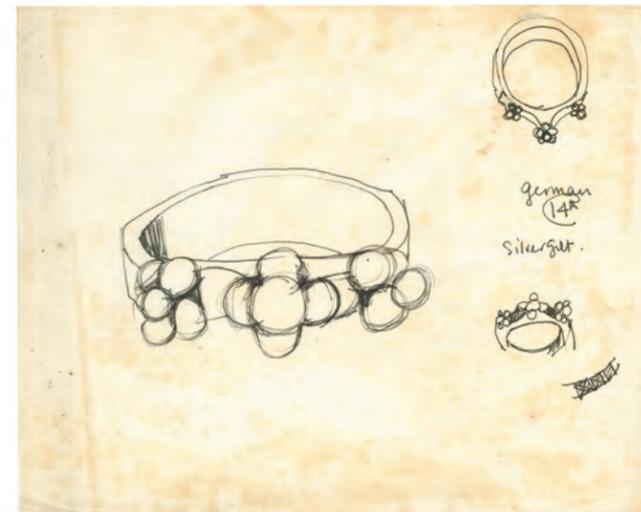
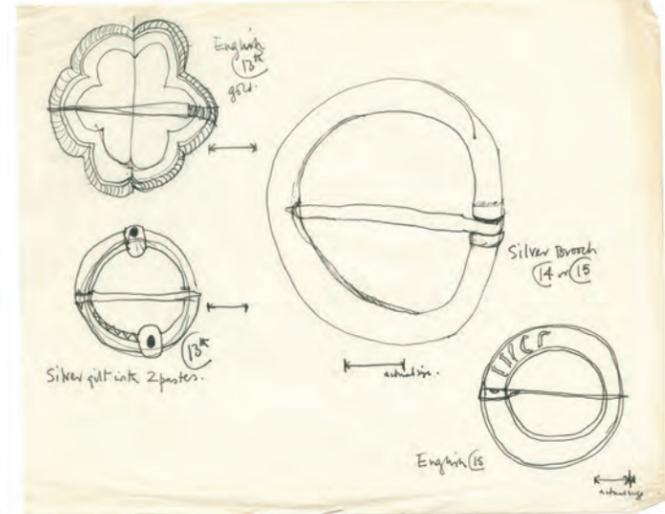
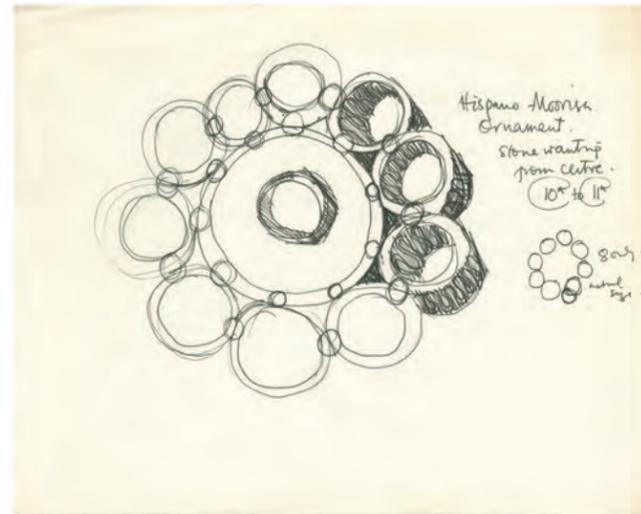
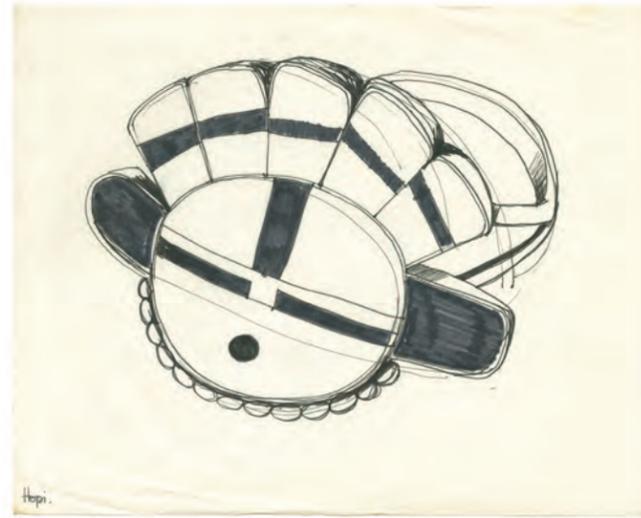
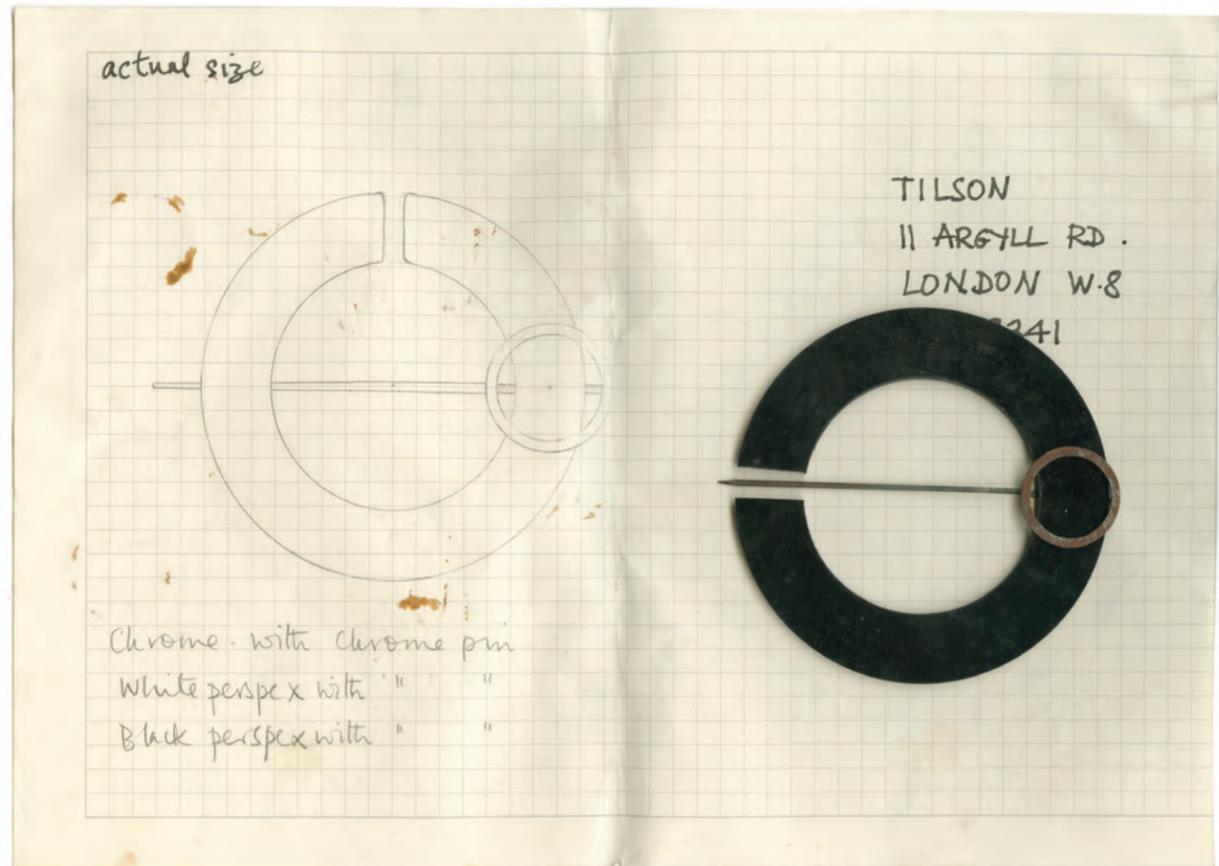
OPPOSITE : Jos in Argyll Road. Photo: Tony Evans

*Butterfly brooch production drawing*, 1968, pencil on paper

*Butterfly brooch*, 1968, enamelled metal and pin, 6.5 x 6 cm

*Butterfly and bird brooch drawings*, 1968, pencil on paper

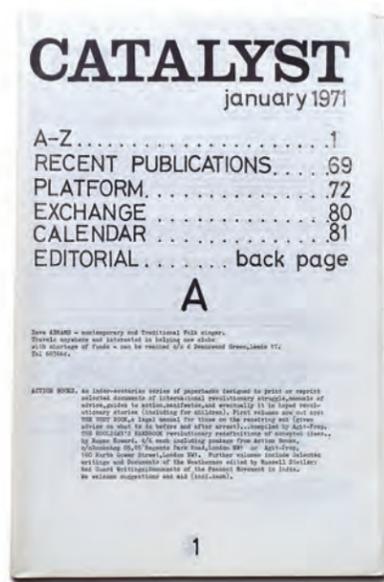
Jos and Sophy outside 11 Argyll Road, London 1968



OPPOSITE: Jos ribbon for neck-ties, 1968  
Chrome and plastic brooch drawing for manufacture, and an actual brooch  
Six jewellery drawings, 1967-68

Like many artists in the late 60s they were extremely active in politics.

Jos attended meetings and helped organise the Campaign Against Museum Charges. Jos also set up a magazine for artists to share resources and information called *Catalyst*. She designed each issue, had it printed and bound and found subscribers. Alongside *Catalyst* Jos worked with Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgely on *AIR* (Artist Information Registry). As it says on the cover "The last issue of *Catalyst* became the first issue of *AIR*" which continued to act as resource for artists, particularly for helping them find studio spaces.



PREAMBLE

Catalyst started in 1969 as a directory of availability - a directory of people who were available to lecture, perform, print posters, dance etc. etc. - it also included facilities that were available for such people to use and also publications and services. This was followed by a similar directory in 1970. In 1971 Catalyst changed and each artist sent in a page, or part of a page, showing visually what they were working on at that moment - a sort of "work-in-progress".

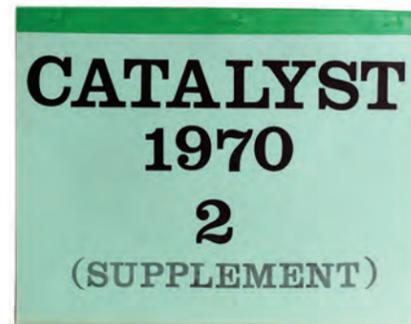
Since then there has been a blow out of information and "They" have now taken this up - every Regional Arts Association has got directories and files and slides (see Regional Arts Associations on page 16) so there is no shortage of outlets if you play the system. Catalyst is now bowing out before "They" invite all artists to send in a page and they'll print no matter what - (repressive tolerance?).

AIR (art information registry) will in future print sheets of information sources relevant to artists - this will come out about twice yearly and will be free.

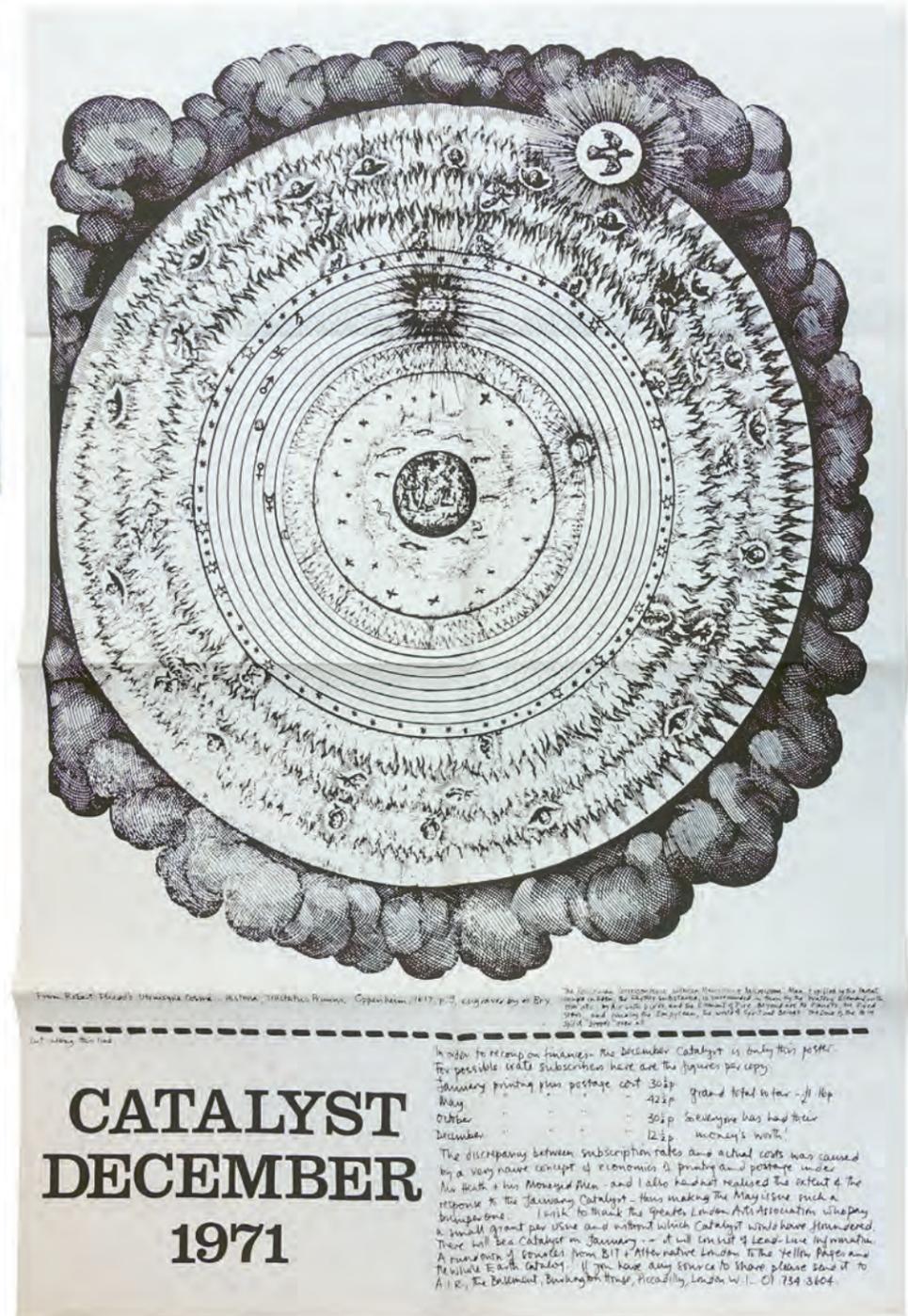
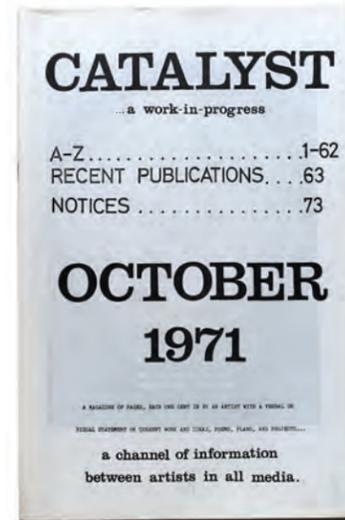
It will be called AIR MAIL and this last Catalyst is the first Air Mail - to be continued and filled out and corrected by YOU and A.I.R.

I'm off to pastures green and polluted rivers and organic parsnips.

Best greetings - Jos.



- Catalyst 1970 1*, 21.8 x 27.6 cm, 75pp (pages 1-75)
  - Catalyst 1970 2 - supplement*, 21.8 x 27.6 cm, 18pp (pages 76-90)
  - Catalyst 1970 3 - supplement*, 21.8 x 27.6 cm, 8pp (pages 91-96)
  - Catalyst January 1971*, 34.2 x 22.5 cm, 84pp
  - Catalyst May 1971*, 45 x 34.2 cm, 57pp
  - Catalyst October 1971*, 34.2 x 22.5 cm, 75pp
  - Catalyst December 1971*, 76 x 51 cm, poster
- Compiled by Jos Tilson, published by AIR, printed by Notting Hill Press



*Catalyst- AIR March 1972*, 22 x 15.5 cm, 22pp  
 Compiled by Jos Tilson,  
 published by AIR, printed by Picton Print  
 in Chippenham, Wiltshire

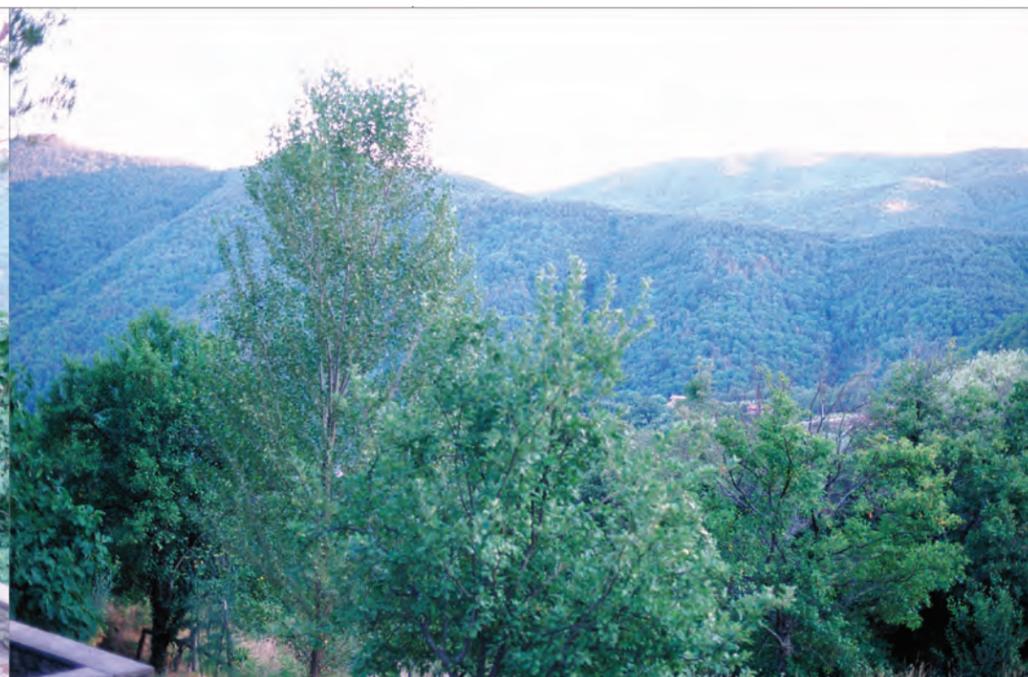


1967 - Jos and Sophy, Argyll Road



Throughout the 60s the family travelled through France in a Landrover to Italy on holidays and for Joe's work.

In 1970 they bought a derelict farmhouse deep in the mountains in Tuscany. It has remained an important house ever since with studios and neighbours and friends in the valley and in nearby Cortona. Friends included Nikos Stangos & David Plante, Nancy and Lauren Jenkins, Burt and Nancy Anderson, Roger Jupe and Val Archer, John Pilger, Germaine Greer, Ann Stokes – and many local families such as the Antolinis, Gustinellis, Monaldis, Rossis, Monacchinis, Atwoods.



By the late 60s Jos and Joe had become immersed in the environmental movement, organic food and self sufficiency, they thought about moving to the country.

Having just bought a farm house in Italy the family then decided to move out of London to a rambling Old Rectory in Wiltshire. They could put theory into practice. In the grounds of the new house they established an extensive kitchen garden with greenhouses, chaff cutters, chickens, bee hives and giant movable compost boxes, all of which was interspersed with sculptural artworks. Thousands of trees were planted, now called Tilson's Wood, and Jos planted a half-mile hedgerow single-handedly.

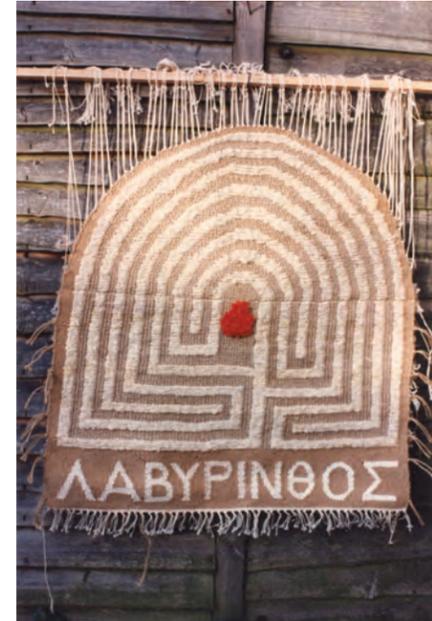
The West Country was attracting other artists from the city including friends such as; Dick and Betsy Smith, Howard and Julia Hodgkin, Peter Blake, Robin and Anna Denny, Pam and John Lifton-Zoline, Paul and Penny Levy Marcus.

Jos continued making art works in Wiltshire including sculptures of chickens and portrait busts in cast concrete. It was with the family tradition of weaving behind her that at this time Jos first began weaving and spinning. However instead of asking artists to design a fabric for her, as her father had done at Edinburgh Weavers, Jos asked the artists permission to interpret one of their images and wove a tapestry from it. She would take the finished weavings to the artist for their approval. These works were more interpretations than collaborations.

OPPOSITE TOP: *Chickens*, cast concrete, 1970s, 50 cm high  
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: *Chickens*, weaving, 1970s  
BOTTOM: *Chickens*, in situ, Wiltshire



1972 - in the garden



Weavings of paintings by:  
Stephen Buckley, Kim Lim,  
Piero Dorazio, John Hoyland,  
Patrick Caulfield, Howard Hodgkin

OPPOSITE:  
Jos's weavings of works by Joe Tilson

In 1982 Jos was introduced to the idea of making ceramics whilst studying with the potter Nino Caruso in Anacapri, Italy.

She was shown many new techniques and materials to work with. On returning to Wiltshire she bought an electric kiln and began to make what would become an ongoing series of large hand built pots in terracotta. The subject matter of Italian architecture also re-surfaced as micro-architectural sculptures made in terracotta. These were created in Tuscany and London, and later in Venice. She briefly taught ceramics to painting and sculpture students at Cheltenham School of Art. At this time Jos had the first of several one person shows of her work at the Berkeley Square Gallery in London, by invitation of Peter Osbourne. She also exhibited at the Cairn Gallery in Nailsworth through Laurie Clark. In 1996 Joe painted the banner for the Palio at Siena. They visited Siena for many years and in 1999 Jos had a major retrospective of her work at the Palazzo Pubblico with a catalogue introduction by the director Mauro Civai. Anita Besson invited Jos to exhibit at Galerie Besson, London, in 2002 and 2010 where she exhibited pots, architecture and weavings.



Jos's ceramic and weaving studio at The Old Rectory, including a large loom and spinning wheel  
1974 - Flavia Morton, who lived in the cottage attached to The Old Rectory



1982 approx. Ana Capri, Italy, raku firing with Nino Caruso



Betsy Smith's annual Easter picnic, 1973 (every Easter since 1966), Monument to Maud Heath, Wick Hill

BACK ROW: Richard Smith, unknown, Howard Hodgkin, unknown, Anna Denny, Dom Denny (in front), Betsy Smith, Jack Lane, Julia Hodgkin, unknown

FRONT ROW: Joe Tilson, Jake Tilson, Anna Tilson, unknown, unknown, Sophy Tilson, Harry Smith, Anna Garnett? (seated), Edward Smith (standing), Louis Hodgkin, Jos Tilson



OPPOSITE:

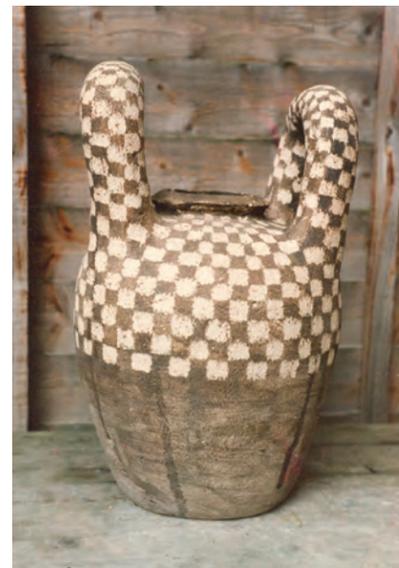
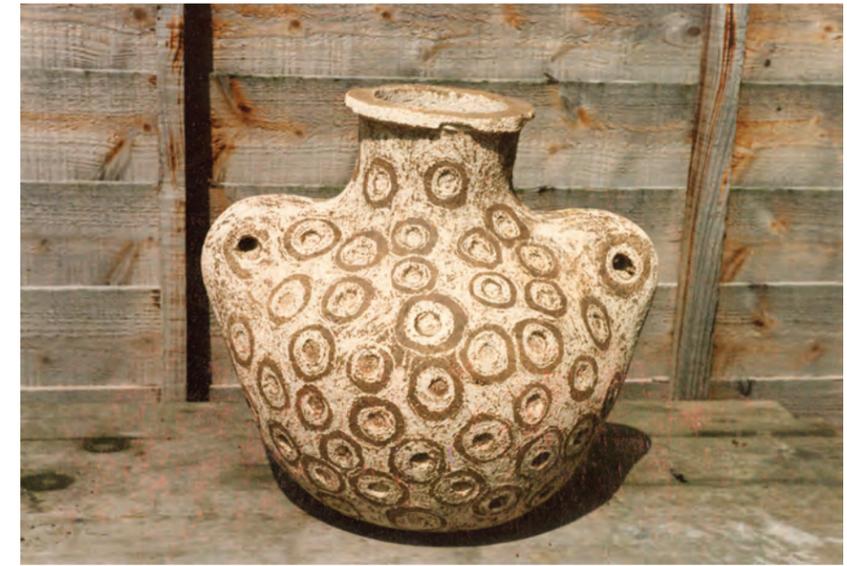
*Large Black with Holes*,  
1985, 34 x 35 cm

*CC Trentacinque (JT7)*,  
1996, 37 x 39 cm

*Grey and White Checks (JT1)*,  
1980s, 40 x 25 cm

*Red with White spots (JT2)*,  
1980s, 43 x 26 cm

*Black with White Stripes (JT3)*,  
1980s, 33 x 28 cm

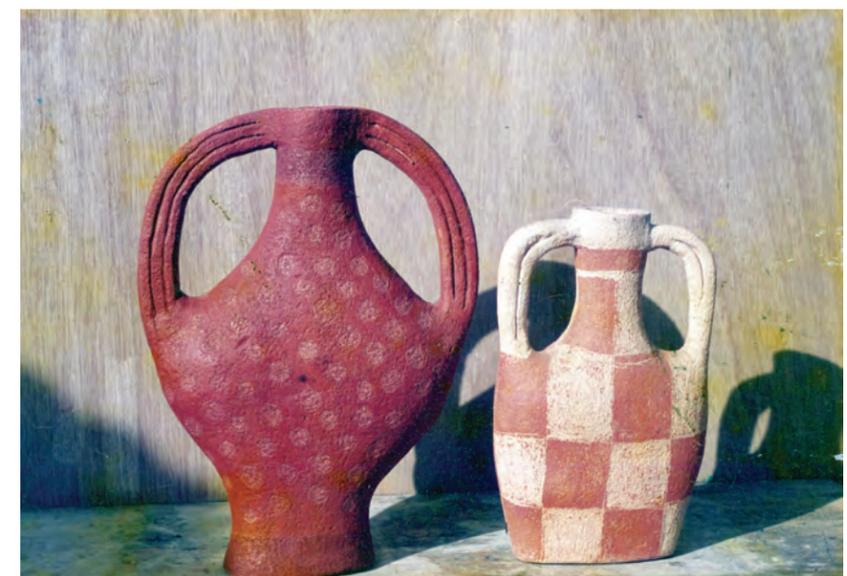


*Medium White with Holes*  
(JT6), 1980s, 28 x 30.5 cm

*Untitled*, 1980s, 28 x 20.5 cm

*Red with Dots and Handles*  
(JT14) 1980s

*Smaller with Red and White Checks*  
(JT13), 1980s





*Large Red with Handles and Spots* (JT28),  
1980s, 40.6 x 20.5 cm  
*Untitled*, 1980s  
*Untitled*, 1980s

*Tall with Large Squares* (JT23),  
1980s, 28 x 12.7 cm  
*Tall with Small Squares* (JT24),  
1980s, 28 x 15 cm

*Small Black Flask* (JT19),  
circa 1980s, 22 x 7.5 cm  
*Tall Black with White Handles* (JT21),  
1980s, 39 x 12.7 cm  
*Medium Striped Flask* (JT20),  
1980s, 37 x 8 cm

*A. U. Large Terracotta Oval* (JT156), 1993, 54 x 37 cm  
*H. L. Large*, 1990, 49.5 x 34 cm

*Untitled* (JT161b), 1980s  
*Untitled* (JT164), 1980s  
*Untitled* (JT162), 1980s



*Large Fake Weave Bowl top*  
(JT211), 1990s

Back: *Untitled* (JT185), 1980s

*Medium Bulls Eye Bowl top*  
(JT212), 1980s

Front: *Untitled* (JT221) 1980s

*Long Neck* (JT215), 1980s

*Squat Notched Flat Red* (JT219), 1980s

*Short Neck* (JT214), 1980s



Group of pots in The  
Old Rectory hall, 1980s

*Black Rimmed Bowl with Check Inside*  
(JT58), 1980s

*White Rimmed Bowl with Check Outside*  
(JT59), 1980s

*Untitled* (JTB), 1980s

*Untitled* (JTC), 1980s

*Untitled*(JTD), 1980s

*Untitled* (JTNFS), 1980s





Group of pots,  
The Old Rectory studio,  
1980s



*Burnt Siena two Handles* (JT74), 1980s, 30.5 cm  
*Untitled* (JT138), 1980s  
*Tall Neck Stripey Handle* (JT109), 1980s

*Untitled* (JT143), 1980s.  
*Untitled* (JT131), 1980s.  
*Checked Double Handles* (JT77), 1980s, 33 cm

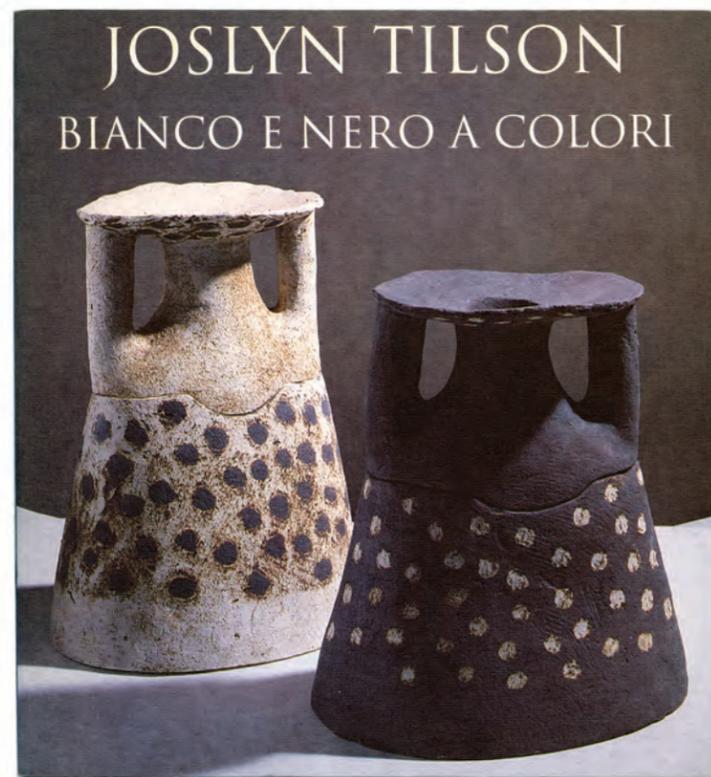
*Tavola*, 1998, 91 x 137 x 86 cm

*Alphabet*, 1998

*Untitled*, 2000, 22 x 8 cm  
*Untitled*, 2000, 22 x 12 ins

*Untitled* (JT152), 1980s  
*Untitled* (JT153), 1980s  
*Untitled* (JT154), 1980s

*Flat Black with Knobs* (JT52),  
1980s, 12 x 34 cm



Casa Cardeto, studio, 2011  
*Bianco e Nero e Colori*, catalogue,  
 Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1999



Casa Cardeto, studio, 2011  
*Bianco e Nero e Colori*, installation  
 view, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1999

6<sup>th</sup> December - 22<sup>nd</sup> December  
 Exhibition Preview  
 6th December  
 6pm - 8pm

**JOSLYN TILSON**

Berkeley Square Gallery 23A Bruton Street London W1J 6QG Tel: 020 7493 7939

**WORKS IN TERRACOTTA 1994-2000**

INVITATION TO A PRIVATE VIEW  
**JOSLYN TILSON**  
 WORKS IN TERRACOTTA 1986 - 2002  
 WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 11TH 2002  
 6.00 - 8.00 PM

THE EXHIBITION CONTINUES  
 UNTIL JANUARY 4<sup>th</sup> 2003

RSPV: BRUCE PORTER  
 bporter@bsqart.com

TWO ARCH, 2002  
 H: 22 x W: 115 x D: 17 cm

FRASEO 2, 2002  
 H: 115 x W: 14.5 x D: 11 cm

BLACK OLIVE, 2002  
 H: 28 x W: 20 cm

PLAZA D'ITALIA 4, 2002  
 H: 12 x W: 28.5 x D: 28.5 cm

FLAT BLACK WITH KNOW, SD, 1989  
 Diameter: 36 cm

FRASEO FIO 4, 2002  
 H: 12 x W: 19 x D: 13 cm

MOUNTAIN STORMER GULL, 1992  
 H: 21 cm

**JOSLYN TILSON**  
 WORKS IN TERRACOTTA 1986 - 2002  
 BERKELEY SQUARE GALLERY



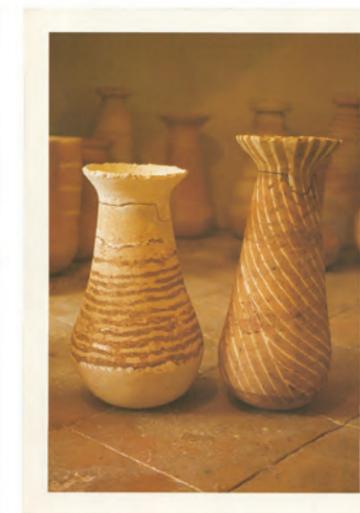
The abstractness, their immediacy, their sense of order: Tilson's ceramics in their own right are the most beautiful monuments of an ancient past with forms that speak the general rather than the specific. Old craft and the new, they are both an integral part of contemporary life. Their other quality, the sense of the earth, of weight and strength and the sense of matter, of objects that have been made for hands, for function, for use, for pleasure, for beauty, for the very sake of making, is the essence of the work. These vessels are an essential contemporary quest for, and enquiry about, truth, they are brought into being by the subtle manipulation of processes. The art made in the maker's workshop, shaped by years of living in Italy, which always arrives but never ends in an Italian landscape.

From an article by Janet Phillips for Studio Pottery 1997

**JOSLYN TILSON**  
 CERAMICS FROM TUSCANY

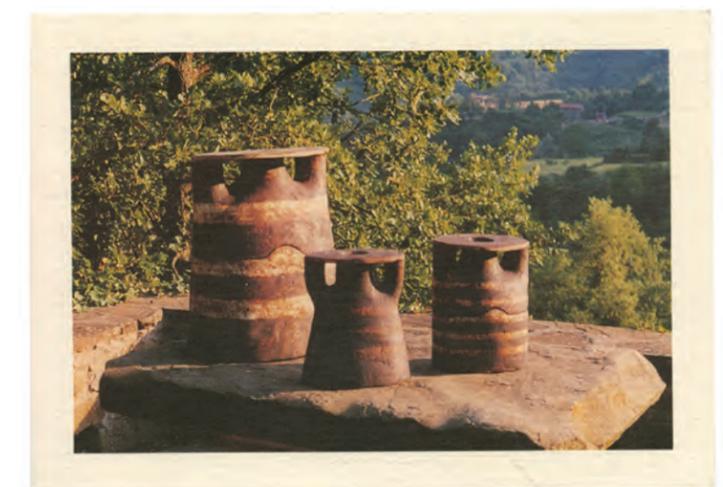
7-24 October 1998

BERKELEY SQUARE GALLERY



**Joslyn Tilson**  
 A Special Exhibition of Ceramics  
 December 13–January 27

Berkeley Square Gallery  
 23A Bruton Street  
 London W1K 7DA



Berkeley Square Gallery; invitation cards, installation views, poster

When Joslyn Tilson's eye fixes on a subject of fascination to her, be it a series of arches, pillars, steps that zigzag in two directions, archaic pot forms or even a tree, her curious imagination leads her to construct her own versions in myriad different ways. Being a sculptor, she draws not with lines but three-dimensionally, most often using terracotta and sometimes flattening the object into a relief or 'portrait'.

Slightly altering the emphasis each time, she will make and remake anew the forms and combination of forms that intrigue her. 'I get obsessions,' she says simply. 'I tend to go on and on and on. When I work on a series I take it to its full length.' Such persistent application of possibilities leads to surprisingly fresh and unprecious work.

Coming as she does from a family – and a long tradition – of weavers, in which all the eldest daughters weave (and she is one), she also translates her vision into thread. This complicated process, she finds, comes more naturally to her than painting, to which it is akin. But while her pot forms are rounded and substantial, with uneven matt surfaces, her weaves are miniature and precise, with subtle variations and flashes of colour – shades found in the natural world but startling nonetheless.

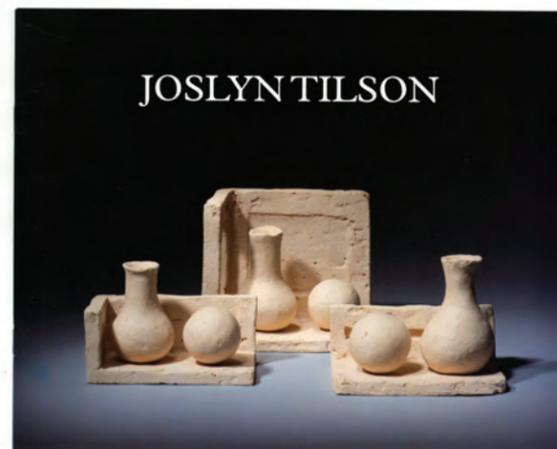
Her series of objects make satisfying groups. Their variations feed into each other, creating a rhythm. The terracottas are often uncoloured, or red or black – rusty hues made from oxides. They often contain architectural 'conceits', such as a doorway set within a doorway (as in a de Chirico painting – a favourite of hers), or stairs slotted into a cube. And she is more likely to focus on a small detail or fragment of a building or landscape (or a formal arrangement

of elements within it) than a panorama. Alice in Wonderland-like, her miniature aqueducts, buildings and pillars do not feel tiny, but have a momentousness to them.

Joslyn studied as a sculptor both in England (at Bath Academy of Art under Kenneth Armitage and Bernard Meadows in the 1950s) and then in Italy, first under Marino Marini at the Brera in Milan, and then at the British School in Rome. In the sixties and seventies she brought up her three children. Her interest in clay was reawakened in the early 1980s when her husband Joe was teaching at a summer school in Anacapri and she joined the potter Nino Caruso's classes.

Her pot shapes are built by hand and have holes in the bottom so they are of no practical use – their scale and solidity would also prevent such an outcome. Further evidence of her lack of interest in them as vessels came when she finished a series of pots a few years ago, then turned them into small portraits – terracotta reliefs of swelling shapes pushing at the boundaries of their terracotta frames (her weaves often have integral frames too).

Joslyn continues to draw inspiration from the very fabric of Italy: its stones, architecture and landscapes. She lives there for much of the year, dividing her time between Tuscany in the summer and a studio in Venice. Here she finds herself, 'so aware of the arches everywhere and of the light coming through them' that a magical osmosis occurs. Few sculptors succeed in conveying a sense of light, but by looking through shapes, creating shadows by framing a recess with pillars and constructing corners in which to place objects, she does exactly that.



**Annabel Freyberg**  
for Galerie Besson, 2010

2005 - Italian architecture  
terracottas, London studio



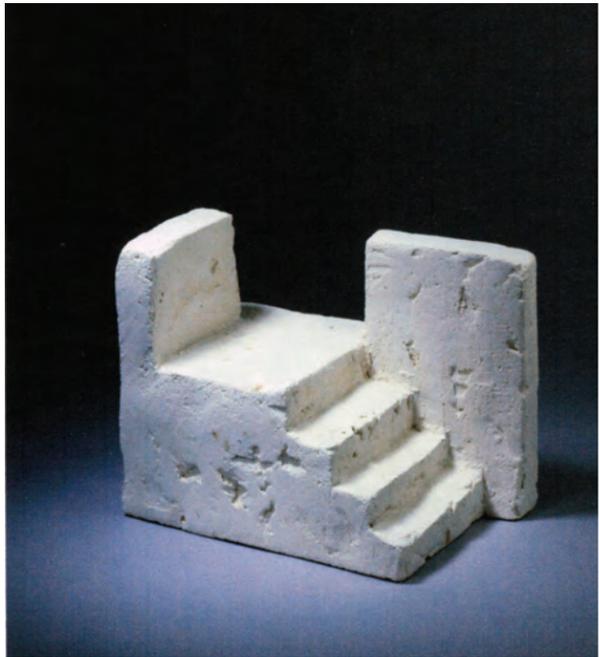
*Two Objects* (JT76),  
2005, 12 x 17.5 x 11.5 cm  
*Two Objects* (JT77),  
2005, 17 x 18 x 13 cm  
*Two Objects* (JT78),  
2005, 14 x 17.5 x 13 cm  
Casa Cardeto studio



*Framed Double Steps* (JT89),  
2001, 16 x 16.5 x 14 cm  
*Framed Small Sphere* (JT90),  
2003, 15 x 14.5 x 5 cm



JT Talking to Massima Portata  
"They're all about light" she said.  
And of course they are. The light  
leading a way through the arches-  
or through apertures in arches. Light  
forming shapes of columns or bulky sides  
of buildings. Light moving up the  
steps of the canals of Venice. Light  
exaggerating the darkness of the interiors  
of small buildings. Light making  
shadows from the sun shining on the  
campaniles.  
In contrast - the weavings are translations  
of light onto forms - black + white.



*Fragment Tree, (JT075) 2000 27.5 x 17.5 x 10 cm*  
*Untitled, 2000s*  
*Untitled, 2000s*  
*Untitled, 2000s*



*Untitled, 2000s*



*Portrait* (JT85), 2005, 28 x 22 cm  
*Portrait* (JT84), 2005, 29 x 23 cm

*San Barnaba* (JT91), 2006, 24.5 x 26.5 cm  
*Le Zitelle* (JT092), 2006, 25 x 26 cm

*Arnaldo's Oak* (JT79), 2001, 31 x 37 cm  
*Spoletto II* (JT88), 2009, 26 x 33 cm



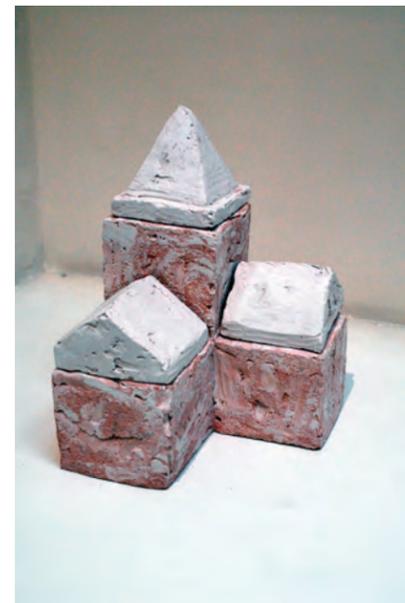
*Sant'Eufemia,*  
2000s, 14 x 14.5 x 20 cm  
*Santa Maria dei Miracoli,*  
2000s, 13.5 x 7 x 17 cm



*Church (JT107),*  
2000s, 24 x 18 x 17cm  
*Church (JT108),*  
2000s, 17 x 16 x 19 cm  
*La Maddalena (JT106),*  
2000s, 14 x 11 x 10 cm

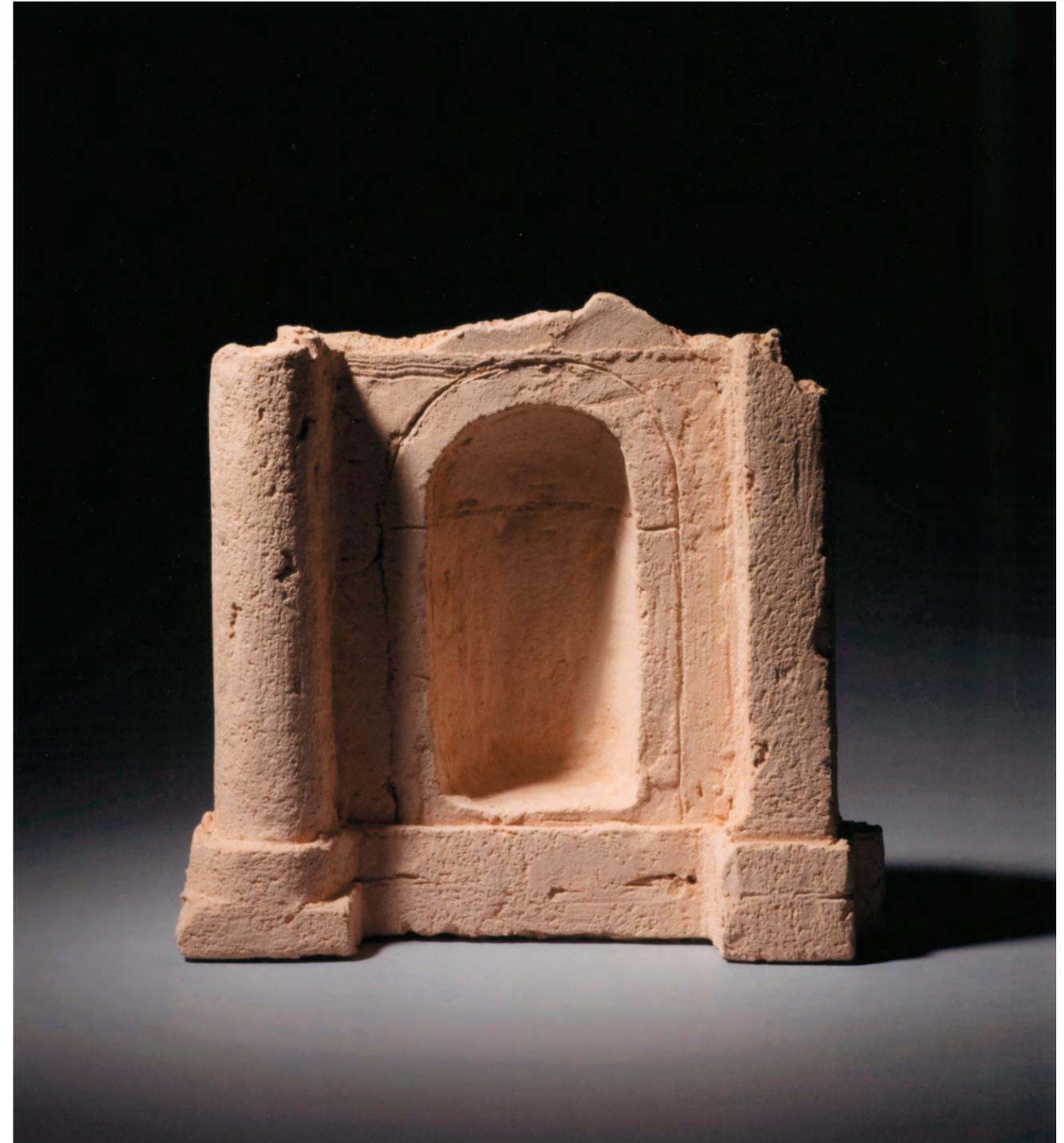


*After de Chirico,* 2000s, 24 x 31 x 15 cm  
*Untitled,* 2000s  
*Untitled,* 2000s

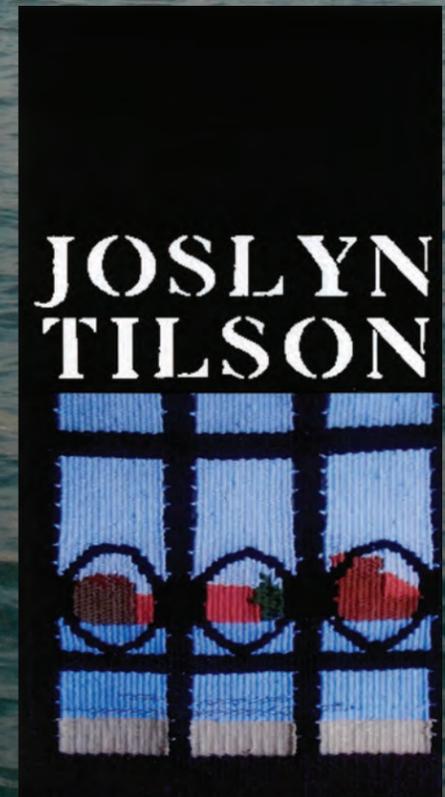
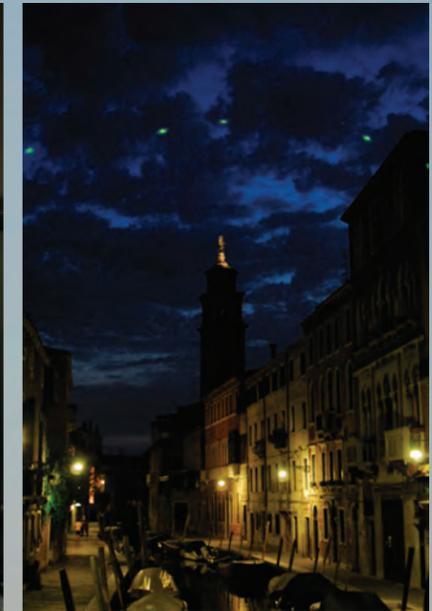




2010 installation views of exhibitions at Galerie Besson  
 TOP LEFT: 2007 installation view Galerie Besson  
 BOTTOM LEFT: Anita Besson & Jos



*Carità, Venice* (JT74),  
 2007, 18.5 x 20 x 7 cm



Weaving began to become central to Jos's studio work again, using her own designs rather than other artists.

In Tuscany she made weavings from the landscape. Work had taken Jos and Joe to Venice and eventually they fulfilled a dream to buy a house there in Dorsoduro in 2002 including studio spaces and a kiln. They now spend many months living and working there. In particular Jos makes weavings looking at the canal.

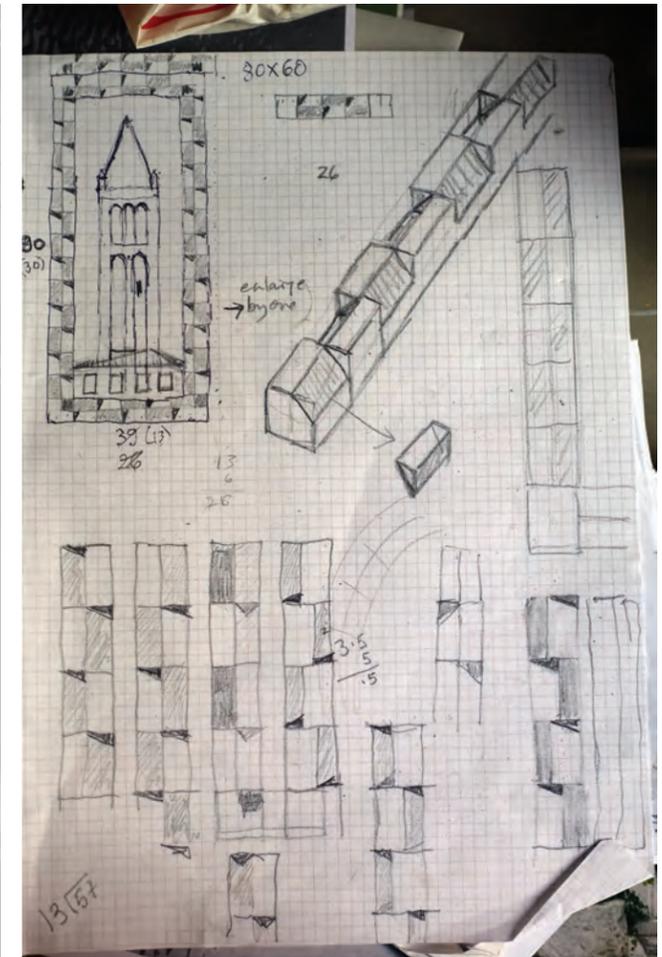


2012 - Weaving studio, Venice, Scarpa works  
BELOW: Jos outside the local fruit and vegetable shop, Pastrello Sally, on Fondamenta de S. Basegio  
Most products are grown on Isola di Sant'Erasmus





Piazza San Marco, 2000s, 54 x 56 cm



2014 - weaving in Venice  
 2010 - preparatory drawing  
 2015 - work in progress, Campo Pisani



*Misericordia*, 2000s, 71 x 56 cm  
*Piazza San Marco*, 2000s, 86 x 28 cm  
*Waters of Venice*, 2000s, 28 cm high

*Ponte de Foscari*, 2000s, 44 x 40 cm  
*Waters of Venice*, 2000s, 18 x 27 cm  
 R: *Steps + Water II*, 2005, 21 x 27 cm  
*Homage to Palladio*, 2012, 20 x 22 cm





*Window*, 2000s, 19 x 20 cm

*Rio de S. Trovaso*, 2000s, 43 x 40 cm

*View from Riviera, Zattere 1*, 2000s, 33 x 38 cm

*View from Riviera, Zattere 2*, 2000s, 28 x 38 cm

*Tre Archi I*, 2000s, 29 x 27 cm

*Tre Archi II*, 2000s, 37 x 40 cm

*Untitled*, 2000s, 26 x 30 cm

*Ponte del Frari*, 2014, 44 x 40 cm



In 2015 Jos was invited by Massimiliano Bugno to exhibit her Venetian weavings at the Bugno Gallery, Venice – curated by Enzo Di Martino. The work shown in Venice revealed Jos’s continuing addiction to Italian architecture which had started as a student in Rome.

“The weavings by Tilson first exhibited in Venice in 2015, were not surprisingly titled Weavings of Venice, as if to document the visual impressions and emotions that she had experienced during the previous decade during her extended working visits to the city in the company of her husband, the artist Joe Tilson, one of the leading figures in British Pop Art of the 1960s.

These works are clearly inspired by Venice, only rarely from an intention to imitate or describe the city. Her aim is almost always to convey a visual emotion arising from her response to a particular architectural form: the design of a church

pavement, the reflection of light in a canal, the particular changeability of light, always diffused, enveloping and impartial. These are matters that were understood in the nineteenth century by another British artist, the great painter J. M. W. Turner.”

**Enzo Di Martino**

Venice, July 2015  
for Bugno Art Gallery  
translated by Marco Livingstone



Jos with Enzo Di Martino  
Jos with Massimiliano Bugno



London studio, 2007  
 Venice studio, 2017  
 Tuscany studio, 2011

**ATLAS**

Published by Atlas  
 16 Talfourd Road  
 London SE15 5NY

ISBN 0 907598 58 8  
 Designed by Jake Tilson  
 Printed by Ex Why Zed  
 Paper: Mohawk Superfine White Eggshell

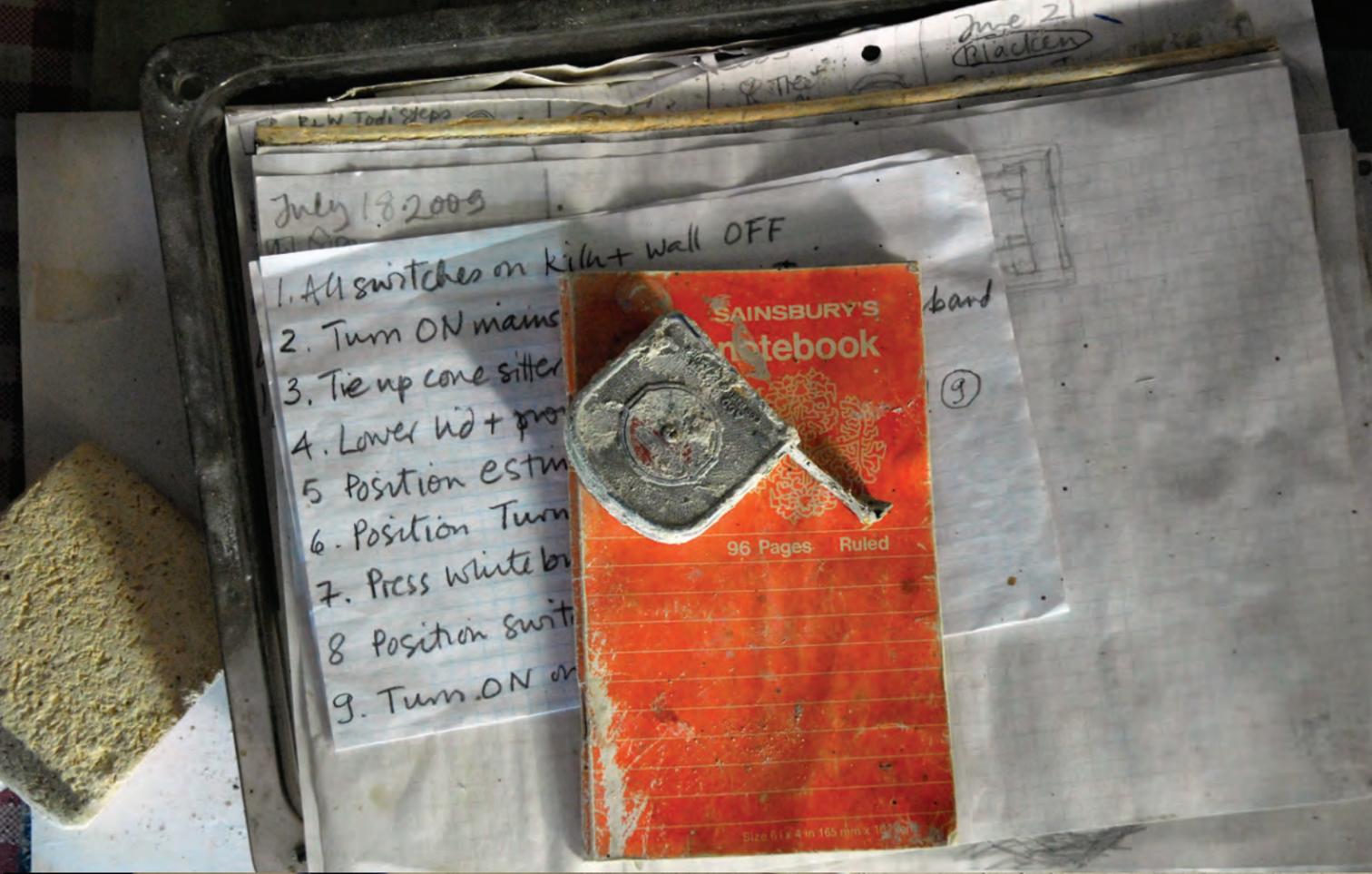
© Copyright Joslyn Tilson 2018.

© Design: Jake Tilson 2018.

All Rights Reserved.

Joslyn Tilson has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher. Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

*Ex Libris Alastair Morton*, by Claude Harrison, c.1951. Printed gummed paper, showing a Belted Galloway from Alastair Morton's herd







JOS

JOS

JOS

JOS

JOS

JOS

JOS

JOS



EMANO

EPAO

JOS

FORNIT

9 77113

R2

La loba

chen

la Gra

di Or

MANIA, GHECIA, IRI, JACO  
NICIUA TD 3,50; TUI, S.A.