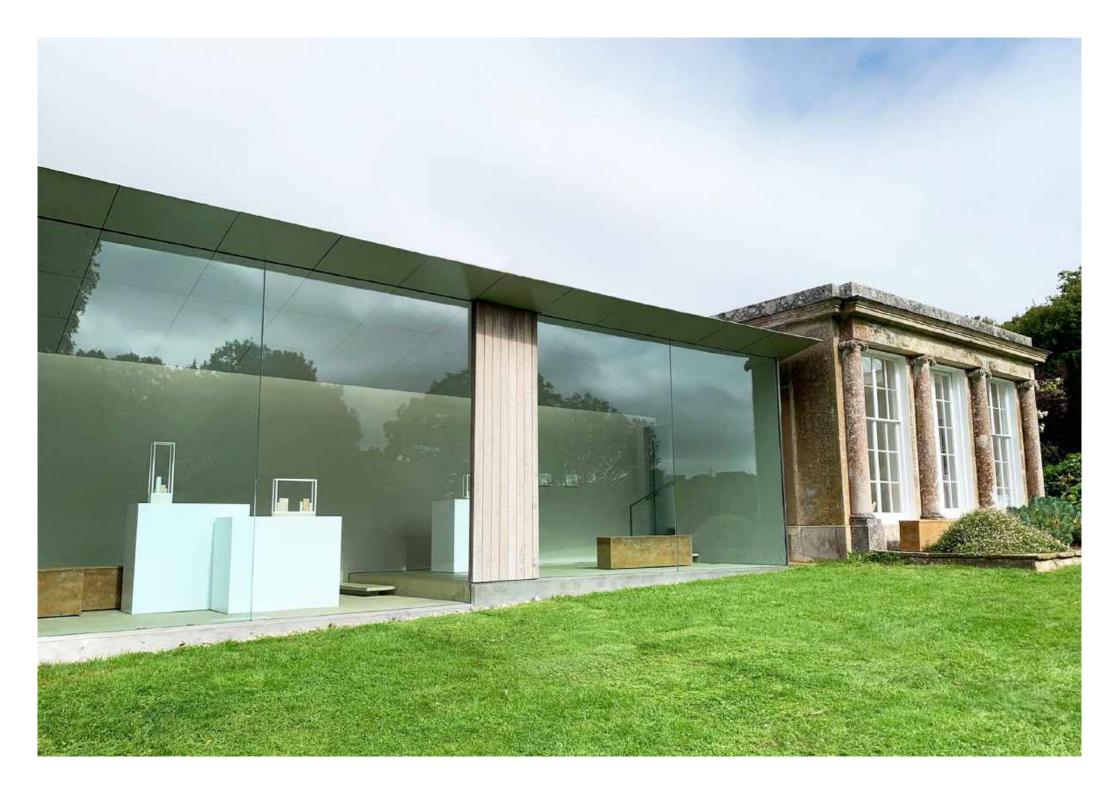
NewArtCentre.

Edmund de Waal tacet

21 September 2020 – 09 January 2021



I've found great pleasure in using materials to hand, English stone and alabaster, the porcelain in my studio, some gold. These are slow works.

- Edmund de Waal, 2020

Edmund de Waal: tacet

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In its entirety, Edmund de Waal's solo exhibition, *tacet*, now on view at the New Art Centre, is a reflection on the last six months of the artist's time in the studio; spent often in solitude, with time and space to think and throw. The exhibition is an installation of a diversity of sculpture – benches carved from Hornton stone alongside more familiar forms and vessels made from alabaster, gold and porcelain. Both bodies of work essentialise and encourage the yearning to pause. 'Tacet', Latin for *it is silent*, is a term most often used in music to indicate when a voice or instrument does not sound, most notably by John Cage in his score 4'33". This whole exhibition offers a very real opportunity to slow down, calling upon the beholder to be attentive to the materials, the arrangements and the sensibility created.

The siting of the exquisite new Hornton stone benches by de Waal in the Gallery and grounds of the New Art Centre marks the first outing for these sculptures, fresh from their time with the stonemason with whom de Waal collaborated, Corin Johnson. By their very nature of being, these benches provide a place to rest, a place to absorb the tranquillity cultivated by the arrangement of forms in the exhibition. Such tranquillity is also garnered by their proximity to nature, facilitated by the open architecture and vast glass windows of the New Art Centre's Gallery space.

The Hornton stone used in his work is an English sedimentary stone, quarried in Oxfordshire. It is rich in colour, with earthen yellows, oranges and browns pooling together. Also known as 'Iron stone', Hornton was a favourite of Henry Moore's, who began using it in the 1920s for his largest forms. He considered it a 'warm, friendly stone', and, for de Waal, it calls to be touched. Far from regular blocks, the benches are carved with textures to be explored with the hand; undulating polished surfaces meet rough planes, soft dents - or 'bruises' – and a gentle ridge. They feel worn, human, and sensitise the sitter to materiality. Each bench has its own character, each has a singular way of the grain appearing to the eye. The idiosyncrasy of each piece accentuates the call for a moment of *tacet*, silence.

And to feel 'known and handled', in the words of David Jones, has been central to de Waal's practice, as has the life and work of the poet, painter, essayist. Jones wrote of "the body and the embodied; hence to history, to locality, to sense-perception, to the contactual, the known, the felt, the seen, the handled, the cared-for, the tended. For a poet this means a response to the texture of words, an exact and evocative use of each word." Jones cared about the particularity of materials. And just as the Hornton stone is profoundly evocative of Oxfordshire, so the alabaster de Waal uses here comes from the last remaining alabaster quarry in Nottinghamshire, and so evokes the long history of alabaster sculpture in this country.

De Waal's light and exacting response to materials is keenly felt in this new body of work. These new sculptures bring together porcelain with gold, glass, alabaster and onyx. In his free-standing installations such as *counter, parti, pied, several* and *with what's to hand* – titles which reference Jones's poem, *The Tutelar of the Place* — gilded slivers of porcelain lean against blocks of alabaster and porcelain vessels, held in space, pausing.

Alongside the alabaster's glorious luminosity, the material is imbued with a sincerity and humanity that, akin to the Hornton stone benches, derives its origins from the earth. Time spent with these sculptures brings the realisation that these are collections of objects and unadorned materials, carefully shaped and arranged, but nonetheless remaining true to their essential form. The translucency of the alabaster and its ability to play with light comes to the fore, which in turn attributes an independence of energy to the works. They almost sing in their interaction with the light and their proximity to the beautiful gardens of the New Art Centre adds a further harmonic quality to the installation.

the tutelar of the place, I 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster and onyx 21 x 29 x 9 cm 8 1/4 x 11 3/8 x 3 1/2 in



When they proscribe the diverse uses and impose the rootless uniformities, pray for us. When they sit in Consilium To liquidate the holy diversities mother of particular perfections queen of otherness mistress of asymmetry patroness of things counter, parti, pied, several protectress of things known and handled help of things familiar and small wardress of the secret crevices of things wrapped and hidden mediatrix of all the deposits margravine of the troia empress of the labyrinth receive our prayers.

Extract from David Jones' poem *The Tutelar of the Place*. The poem first appeared in *Poetry*, volume XCVII, No. 4, (Chicago), January 1961.



the tutelar of the place, *II* 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster and onyx 21 x 29 x 9 cm 8 1/4 x 11 3/8 x 3 1/2 in



Edmund de Waal the tutelar of the place, III 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster and onyx 21 x 29 x 9 cm 8 1/4 x 11 3/8 x 3 1/2 in

I've made some new works using alabaster from a quarry near Nottingham, the material used for the greatest carvings of the Middle Ages, for funerary monuments. This alabaster glows, making things float, brings light into play with the porcelain vessels and tiles that sit with them.

- Edmund de Waal, 2020



Edmund de Waal known and handled 2020 Porcelain, alabaster, gold, aluminium and plexiglass 40 x 48 x 12 cm 15 3/4 x 18 7/8 x 4 3/4 in

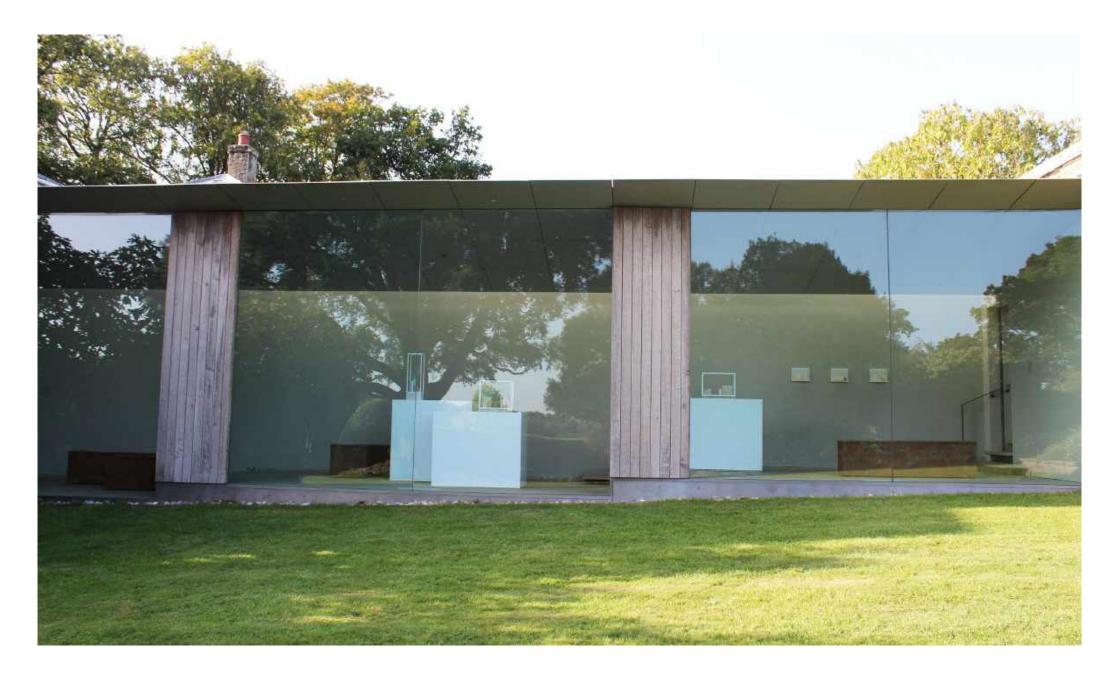


Edmund de Waal counter, parti, pied, several 2020 Porcelain, alabaster, gold, aluminium and plexiglass 71 x 22 x 18 cm 28 x 8 5/8 x 7 1/8 in



kin, enclosure, site 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster, aluminium and plexiglass 40 x 50 x 13 cm 15 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 5 1/8 in









Edmund de Waal with what's to hand 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster, aluminium and plexiglass 40 x 18 x 16 cm 15 3/4 x 7 1/8 x 6 1/4 in Edmund de Waal speak to me 2020 Porcelain, gold, alabaster, aluminium and plexiglass 40 x 18 x 16 cm 15 3/4 x 7 1/8 x 6 1/4 in In these last months I realised how much I wanted to make things for people to touch. These new works use Hornton stone from a quarry near Tew in Oxfordshire, the same seam as the stone that Henry Moore used for his Madonna and Child in St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. They are benches, carved and polished so that there are different textures to discover. I hope they feel old, weathered, 'known and handled' to borrow David Jones' words. I've called them tacet. Silence, rest.

- Edmund de Waal, 2020



Edmund de Waal tacet I 2020 Hornton stone 48 x 180 x 35 cm 18 7/8 x 70 7/8 x 13 3/4 in





tacet IV 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 120 x 35 cm 19 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 13 3/4 in



Edmund de Waal tacet IX 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 57 x 35 cm 19 1/4 x 22 1/2 x 13 3/4 in

Edmund de Waal tacet II 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 130 x 35 cm 19 1/4 x 51 1/8 x 13 3/4 in



tacet VI 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 73 x 34.5 cm 19 1/4 x 28 3/4 x 13 5/8 in

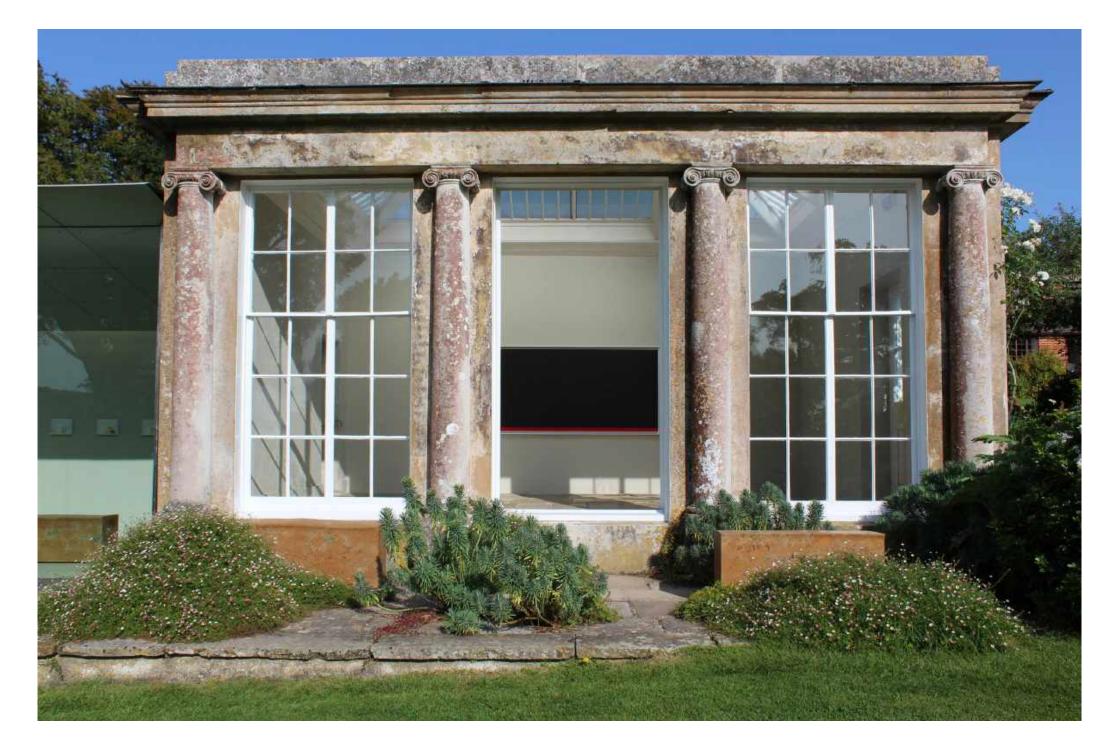




Edmund de Waal tacet V 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 110 x 35 cm 19 1/4 x 43 1/4 x 13 3/4 in



Edmund de Waal tacet III 2020 Hornton stone 49 x 130 x 35 cm 19 1/4 x 51 1/8 x 13 3/4 in





Edmund de Waal tacet VIII 2020 Hornton stone 51 x 60 x 35 cm 20 1/8 x 23 5/8 x 13 3/4 in



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