Ruth Duckworth, *Untitled (Sphere and Blade)*, 2001

Featured Works at the Tweed with Bill Shipley - a series of short gallery talks on work from the Tweed Museum of Art Permanent Collection

Ruth Duckworth, a Modernist sculptor in stone and clay who lived to the age of 90 and who from the mid-1960’s worked in her Chicago studio, is the first artist featured in this series of short lectures on significant works of art from the Tweed Museum. This sculpture (though not titled) is from 2001 when Duckworth constructed a group of porcelain tabletop sized sculptures that balanced a thin blade or knife shape against a more robust ball or sphere shape. Our sculpture is beautifully illustrated on the cover of the Ruth Duckworth book (by Jo Lauria and Tony Birks) that was published on the occasion of an exhibit at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York in 2005.

Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1919, Ruth Duckworth wanted to be an artist from a young age but as with many German-Jewish families she was not allowed to attend art school during the rise of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Because her father had dual citizenship in England and Germany, he brought the whole family to England in 1936. Ruth enrolled at the Liverpool School of Art until around 1940 and gradually found her calling for sculpture - at first carved stone relief work in a classical figurative style.

Over the years Duckworth met fellow artists Henry Moore and Lucie Rie and developed a love of the sculpture of Constantin Brancusi among others who found inspiration in primitive and folk art with their simplified and symbolic forms.

Our sculpture has a direct affinity for Cycladic sculpture and bronze age tools and implements that Duckworth would discover at the British Museum. She is quoted as saying that “the Cycladic sculptures are powerful, simple shapes. The forms are reduced to their essential outlines, yet they convey strong emotions. They are so perfect - they say so much with so little.”