

In Conversation: Alma Allen and J.B. Blunk

Like a blind date, this exhibition stages an encounter between two artists who never met but whose work shares a deep affinity. The work of Alma Allen (b. 1970) and J.B. Blunk (1926–2002) blurs the line between craft, design, and sculpture, with both men inspired by nature’s visceral power and beauty to create evocative work from materials found on the land.

Both men are self-taught and each began making work on a small hand-made scale from inexpensive materials: Blunk in ceramic and Allen in wood and stone. Working alone in rather remote locations—Blunk in Inverness, CA, and Allen until recently in Joshua Tree, CA—gave them the space and freedom to expand the scale and range of their practices to encompass not only tabletop objects, furniture, and sculpture but also the design and construction of their own homes and studios. Photographs by Lisa Eisner and Leslie Williamson show how each man shaped his world.

Blunk is best known for furniture and sculpture, some of it monumental in scale, made from redwood and cypress, while Allen has recently expanded his practice to include much larger works in bronze and stone. Much of the work by Allen in the exhibition was made especially for the occasion, including several stone sculptures shown outside. By juxtaposing the work of these two artists from different generations, which has never been shown together, common influences and themes emerge and the conversation begins in earnest.

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