

*Rustling the Deities* is one of two works inspired by the rhyton (the other being *Of Rhytonous Things* for recorder(s) and harpsichord). Rhyta are stylized, often highly ornate vessels of the ancient world—typically Persian or Greek— from which fluid was drunk or poured as part of some ceremony. At times crafted in the shape of animal heads, they could embody anything ranging from benign sheep to the mythological griffin.

The four musical decanters of *Rustling the Deities*, while similarly representative, have a somewhat different take. Rather than graphic mimicry, they draw from the strong lines, bold filigree and vivid depictions characteristic of their concrete cousins to create a collection of strange, fantastical and purely sonic creatures of their own.

By far the most elaborate rhyton, the first movement is crowded with vibrant characters at once sacred and profane. The depiction reflects not just this motley crew but also its ongoing, vivacious self-entanglement. There is formality to the dance, however, as the wild gesturing is encased in ritual, for which its participants are ultimately grateful.

In contrast, the second movement is a solitary beast of the desert. Not just the weathered hide and skull have been crafted here: there is a desiccated mind as well, mulling over its loneliness with increasing agitation.

The third movement is a three-way contest, perhaps a fractious love-triangle. In typical rhytonous fashion, each protagonist is presented separately, in stylised, contrasting poses highlighting their idiosyncratic powers. Interplay between these three animal-gods is only ever hinted at, a promise of frisson never quite fulfilled.

To conclude, a stable of equine creatures pelt riotously through verdant steppes populated by mischievous rock formations and skittish, allusive inhabitants. At first the game is only a collective thought, but soon enough it's a trot, then a canter and finally a liberating, carefree gallop as the landscape concedes to their abandon.

The work as a whole has clear, orthodox structures, from the traditional four-movement arc down to easily recognizable repetition of licks. It is hoped this straightforwardness, in paradoxical collusion with *Rustling the Deities'* outlandish fauna, might tap into a singular power of rhytons: to take run-of-the-mill subjects and imbue them with mythic qualities which transcend any sense of domesticity, sentimentality or caricature.