CERAMICS NOW

JANE HARTSOOK GALLERY’S 2015 EXHIBITION SERIES

EXHIBITIONS

LEE SOMERS, JANUARY 16 – FEBRUARY 13, 2015

GHADA AMER, TRISHA BAGO, ROBIN CAMERON, JOANNE GREENBAUM, PAM LINS, ALICE MACKLER, DAVID SALLE, FEBRUARY 27 – MARCH 27, 2015

JEREMY HATCH, APRIL 10 – MAY 8, 2015

ANDREA CLARK, JULY 9 – AUGUST 7, 2015

EUN-HA PAEK, OCTOBER 9 – NOVEMBER 6, 2015

NAOMI CLEARY AND PERRY HAAS, NOVEMBER 21 – DECEMBER 18, 2015

JANE HARTSOOK GALLERY AT GREENWICH HOUSE POTTERY
This catalog, “Ceramics Now”, was published in conjunction with the “Ceramics Now 2015” exhibition series held at Greenwich House Pottery’s Jane Hartsook Gallery from January 2015 – December 2015.

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The Jane Hartsook Gallery broadens the ceramic sphere in our community, the field, and the artworld with an emphasis on promoting emerging and underrepresented artists. This year is no exception as we continue to lead the way, showcasing the possibilities and versatility of clay. We are fortunate to be able to offer many artists their New York City exhibition debut. The 2015 “Ceramics Now” series included a broad curation of art practice and exceptional ability from across the United States, featuring solo exhibitions by Lee Somers (Alabama), Andrea Clark (Kentucky), Jeremy Hatch (Montana), Eun-Ha Park (New York City), a two-person exhibition featuring Naomi Cleary (Pennsylvania) and Perry Haas (Montana), as well as a group exhibition featuring Ghada Amer, Trisha Baga, Robin Cameron, Joanne Greenbaum, Pam Lins, Alice Mackler and David Salle (New York City).

The pretense under which I curated this year’s exhibitions for “Ceramics Now” has endured since developing the series in 2011, “What is Ceramics Now?” Though striving to attain some appreciable differences between one year and the next may seem to put an unnecessarily heavy emphasis on newness, change does happen, both spontaneously and gradually. As noted in last year’s catalogue essay, there is a groundwork of interest in ceramics within the artworld, and though this might seem like one of those “aha” moments, it has truly been percolating for some time. With that in mind, I set out to determine what practice or set of practices best encapsulate the activity taking place within the field today. Which artist(s) working in clay exude contemporary ceramicness? Though I do not claim that these artists and their work somehow outperform all others, I would argue that these particular artists represent something unique and original that speaks to the present. The line-up includes a variety of approaches, materials and processes: bricolage, casting, installation, performance, anime, narrative, sculpture, decals, spray foam, paint, priority mail shipping boxes, resin, electricity, porcelain, terra cotta, Scandinavian roof tiles, pottery, video and wood fire.

“Ceramics Now 2015” kicked-off with Lee Somers, an Alabama-based artist whose layered bricolage of brilliant shards recall Chinese landscape painting. The ancient scroll paintings from which Somers draws inspiration were created by “cultured” men seeking escape from the lifeworld to commune with nature. This pattern is present in the American psyche and can be readily discerned through cinema (Dances with Wolves), literature (Thoreau), and the visual arts (Beuys). There is no shortage of images and examples of our attempts to return to the land and detach ourselves from societal oppression. This idea of withdrawing to nature has been a recurring theme for centuries and becomes even more urgent as our society seeks to restore balance. Though much philosophizing takes place around ceramics and its general ethos of a return to nature, few artists manage it with such an elegant basis in art history. It is the contemporary equivalent of Albert Bierstadt’s sublimely naturalist paintings, thinly veiled propaganda inciting adventurers to go West. Unlike anything else being created in the field, Somers’ assemblages are narratives that “compress geologic time.” One gets the sense that he is collapsing the entirety of human civilization into a single breathtaking moment. Similar to the scroll paintings that Somers’ references, these works exude the sublime.
Jeremy Hatch, a Montana-based artist, has done the unimaginable – slip cast a chain-link fence. In the large-scale installation, Hatch had reimagined the space into a virtuosic porcelain performance, recreating the “love-lock” craze. This practice involves inscribing a couple’s names or initials on a padlock, affixing it to a bridge, and throwing the key into the body of water below – much to the consternation of city officials across the globe. Hatch’s fence, weighted down with locks, bisected the gallery and went a step further to implicate the viewer in the performance. During the exhibition, visitors were invited to cast their own lock and add it to the lot. This activity replicated the trend which has become a worldwide sensation over the last decade. Arguably a bizarre custom employed by Hatch to create a happening, facilitating the process of creation, not destruction. While retaining the significance of the performance, the participants were able to go beyond the act of defacing public property; they became part of a happening, fabricating the process of creation, not destruction.

Andrea Clark was this year’s resident artist. Originally from Kentucky, Andrea was selected by a three person panel to participate in Greenwich House Pottery’s ten month resident artist program. During her residency, Clark continued her investigation into thin porcelain, finding inspiration to challenge the capacity of color. She conducted numerous material and color experiments which created a laboratory like environment in the studio. This exhibition showcased her relationship with the genre and the work she produced during her time here, as well as highlighting her process, her approach to the material, and her ability to push the material to new edges. Her investigation into the physicality of clay, pushing, pulling, pinching and tearing at the forms, while Mackler utilizes the material to express her inner impulses. The pure abstractions of Greenbaum occupy a middle ground - not quite representative, though not completely groundless. Baga and Lins recreate actual objects, or in Baga’s case, people. Their approach to the material expresses a real joy in exploration and creation. Cameron, whose work vacillates between the figure and the vessel, recycles the old to breathe life into the new. Amer’s works are representations of the female form made with vivid porcelain coloration. Regardless of the artist, color is a central theme in their work, coupled with an unbounded enthusiasm for material potential. The artists are joined together through their communion with material. No single artist forces the material to disassociate with its existencial character. Clay is clay, and they allow it to exist alongside their creation.

The work of Naomi Cleary and Perry Haas highlights the eclecticism prevalent within the field of contemporary ceramics. Their respective approaches to the material, both in making, glazing (or not) and firing could not be more diverse. Cleary favors the industrial process of mold making and casting to create replicas of existing objects, repeating form time and again. Expression emerges as she illustrates and layers the surfaces, culminating in both colorful abstract patterns and recognizable imagery. Her drawings unfold on the interior and exterior of the porcelain forms. Haas creates one-off forms on the potter’s wheel with each piece appropriating the subtleties of its production. He uses the wood firing method which allows flame, ash and time to uniquely modify the ceramic surface. While Haas has proven himself to be knowledgeable regarding the firing process, there is still a fair amount of uncertainty at play as each piece evolves in the kiln. Haas embraces the materiality of clay, pushing and prodding it. His control is balanced with acceptance of clay’s forceful character. Their works are each other’s counterpoint, offering two sides to a complicated and delicate conversation.

Andrea Welch is the Director of Greenwich House Pottery and Lecturer at Princeton University.

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LEE SOMERS

“Scapes”
1) Portable Landscape, 2012
2) Scape II, 2012
3) Scape, 2010
4) Scape IV, 2013
5) Electric Horizon, 2014
6) Shan Shui, 2014

Statement

I am fascinated by the intersection of our cultural and natural histories. Architecture and landscape locate the human perspective in this nexus. Cartography and the natural sciences abstract and expand, overlaying our perceptions with alternate models of time and space. In travel, time spent outdoors, observation of ruins, cities, landscapes, and moments of sublime experience I am compelled by the systems in which we exist.

I find ceramics the perfect material metaphor for the entwinement of natural and cultural processes. Ceramics is a microcosm, compressing geologic time and the history of civilization into moments. Working with it is a process of reconciling intentions with serendipity. I strive to be mindful in making, attend to and question standards of craftsmanship, and remain open to indeterminate outcomes. My process is often experimental, utilizing products of chance. Collage is a key strategy in both physical and conceptual organization. Drawing from a variety of sources, sampling, collecting, and cataloging precedes a period of compositional trial and error. The resulting works weave a matrix of relations where juxtaposition is evident, components are both individual and integrated, and imagination is given multiple points of departure.
GHADA AMER
TRISHA BAGA
ROBIN CAMERON
JOANNE GREENBAUM
PAM LINS
ALICE MACKLER
DAVID SALLE

1) Ghada Amer, Smoking Girl in Color, 2015
2) Ghada Amer, Lover's Night, 2015
3) Ghada Amer, A Hidden Kiss, 2015
4) Trisha Baga, Justice, 2015
5) Trisha Baga, Camera, 2015
6) Trisha Baga, Woman, 2015
7) Robin Cameron, Vayyyyyyyyyyse, 2015
8) Robin Cameron, The Dashed Misconstrue, 2013
9) Robin Cameron, Vayyyyyyyse, 2014
10) Joanne Greenbaum, Untitled, 2014–2015
12) Joanne Greenbaum, Untitled, 2014–2015
13) Joanne Greenbaum, Untitled, 2014–2015
14) Joanne Greenbaum, Untitled, 2014–2015
15) Pam Lins, Model, Model, Model, 2013
16) Alice Mackler, Untitled, 2014
17) Alice Mackler, Untitled, 2015
18) Alice Mackler, Untitled, 2015
19) Alice Mackler, Untitled, 2013
20) Alice Mackler, Untitled, 2014
21) David Salle, Vessel 42, 2014
22) David Salle, Comet, 2013
23) David Salle, Plate 41, 2014
Robin Cameron, from left to right, The Dashed Misconstrue, Vayyyyyyyysye, Vayyyyyyyse

Robin Cameron, Vayyyyyysye
Statement

“Matter of Time” (affection, affliction) builds upon my use of the physical and psychological properties of porcelain as a means to explore themes of memory, relationships, nostalgia and failure. The installation consists of a cast porcelain chain-link fence running the length of the gallery and relies on viewer participation in order to complete the work. From a library of plaster molds, gallery visitors are invited to cast a lock, inscribe it, and attach it to the ceramic chain-link panels. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the fence and amassed locks will be fired, fusing the objects together, serving as a permanent record of the event.

Over the past decade the ritual of attaching ‘love locks’ to public bridges, fences, gates and other urban structures has become an international phenomenon. My interest lies in the inherent contradictions contained within this seemingly innocuous romantic gesture. The custom can also be seen as a form of destructive vandalism. Just as sections of historic bridges are collapsing under the weight of accumulated locks, my porcelain replica risks a similar fate. Rather than struggling to maintain a sense of security, it embraces the potential for failure and the realization that vulnerability is fundamental.
ANDREA CLARK

“No Truth, No Lies”
1) Fog, 2015
2) Daybreak, 2015
3) Rainbow II, 2015
4) Fire, 2015
5) Windows, 2015
6) Churches, 2015
7) Still Life with Roe’s Hand, 2015
8) Milk Cartons, 2015
9) Cascading Leaves, 2015
10) Arrangement VI (picnic), 2015
11) Arrangement VIII, 2015

Statement

My current work concentrates on constructing objects out of folded paper painted with porcelain. Through this intricate process of making, I re-familiarize myself with the object. By reducing it to a permanent, solid, material form I seek to release the object’s immaterial essence. I perceive the end of my time at Greenwich House Pottery as the beginning of my experimentation with the essence of objects.
EUN-HA PAEK

“A Part of, a parting”
1) Poodle Zero, 2015
2) Poodle Zero, 2015
3) Molt, 2014
4) Close Encounters, 2015
5) Third Kind, 2015
6) Poodle Two, 2015
7) Poodle Split, 2015
8) Block Head, 2015
9) Dog Box Pink, 2015
10) Lil Poodle Box, 2014-2015
11) Dog Box Blue, 2014
12) Doggie Ball, 2015
13) Baggie Dog, 2015
14) Dog Box Yellow, 2014
15) Tongue on a Ball, 2015
16) Poodle Mash, 2015
17) Dog Box Orange, 2014
18) Wallplant, 2015
19) Faceplant, 2015
20) Teleporting 1, 2015
21) Teleporting 2, 2015
22) Teleporting 3, 2015
23) Teleporting 4, 2015
24) Teleporting 5, 2015
25) Teleporting 6, 2015
26) Teleporting 7, 2015
27) Teleporting 8, 2015
28) Teleporting 9, 2015
29) Teleporting 10, 2015
30) Teleporting 11, 2015
31) Teleporting 12, 2015
32) Big Hat, 2015
33) Vu, 2014-2015
34) Deja, 2014-2015
35) Poodle with Hat, 2015
36) Echo, 2015
37) Etc., 2015
38) Poodle Shapes, 2015
39) Poodle Friends, 2015
40) Poodle Face, 2015
41) Poodle Purple, 2015
42) Rhyme, 2015
43) Poodle Hat, 2015
44) Poodle Head, 2015
45) A Miss, 2015
46) Poodle Molting, 2015
47) Poodle Ear, 2015
48) Poodle Portal, 2015
49) Sailor Drumstick, 2013-2014
50) Poodle One, 2015

Statement

The same way a boulder on a hill stores potential energy, a banana peel on the floor is the setup to a joke, storing potential “ha-has”. The setup might cause a smirk, without any real action taking place. My work uses this potential to construct narratives on the precipice of the familiar and strange; to explore our inner workings of grief and hope with humor.
from left to right, Close Encounters, Third Kind

from left to right, Poodle One, Poodle Two, Poodle Split
from left to right, Lil Poodle Box, Dog Box Pink
Wallplant

Big Hat
Naomi Cleary
Dishes hold the potential for human connection through their tactile nature. Most of us have associations and memories connected to dishes. We look at dishes and can easily imagine using them. They live in our physical space, in our kitchen cabinets, are used every day. They have a relationship to our bodies. We pick them up and even touch them to our mouths. Dishes speak of history and lineage, passed down from mother to daughter, connected to family dinners, celebrations and sharing. They are a reminder of the warmth and comfort found in domestic spaces.

Perry Haas
I approach making with a childlike spirit of experimentation and exploration. My work stems from a love of the wood-fired ceramic surface, particularly how it evokes many beautiful natural phenomena. Like imagining the way wind gathers and deposits leaves on a landscape according to changes in topography, I anticipate the manner in which ash will collect differently on the convex and concave surfaces of my gestural forms. These functional pots are developed as a place for this surface to exist and to be enjoyed as a part of our daily life.
Perry Haas, from left to right, Shallow Bowls, Moon Jars, Serving Bowl
Perry Haas, from left to right, Whiskey Cup, Footed Mug

Perry Haas, from top to bottom, Plates, Tumblers