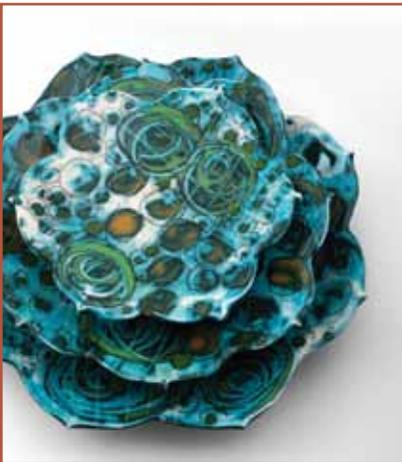


# fresh work in contemporary ceramic art



ceramic sculpture and  
pottery by emerging artists



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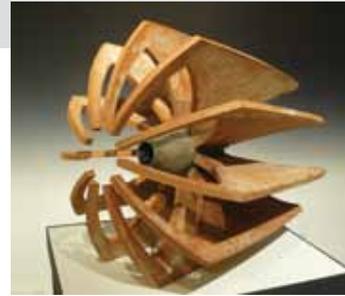
# Fresh Work in Contemporary Ceramic Art: Ceramic Sculpture and Pottery by Emerging Artists

With so much incredible contemporary ceramic art being created today, it becomes difficult to keep up with new, up-and-coming ceramic artists. To help keep you abreast of all the great contemporary ceramic art being made by emerging artists, the editors of *Ceramics Monthly* have put together a juried collection of some of the most exciting contemporary ceramics out there. **Fresh Work in Contemporary Ceramic Art: Pottery and Ceramic Sculpture by Emerging Artists** includes fifteen promising contemporary ceramic artists, who have been pursuing a career in the field for less than ten years. Inside, you will find images of their work, insights (in their own words) about their motivations, inspirations and techniques.

Whether you're looking for inspiration for your own ceramic art or you're a collector looking to add to your ceramics collection, **Fresh Work in Contemporary Ceramic Art: Pottery and Ceramic Sculpture by Emerging Artists** includes contemporary ceramic sculpture, functional pottery, and compelling ceramic installation art.

## Contemporary Ceramic Artists Included:

- Aaron Tennessee Benson, Helena, Montana
- Douglas Peltzman, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Mike Jabbur, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Angelique Tassistro, Asheville, North Carolina
- Guy Michael Davis and Katie Parker, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Myungjin Kim, Torrance, California
- Kip O'Krongly, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Yoko Sekino-Bové, Washington, Pennsylvania
- Peter Christian Johnson, La Grande, Oregon
- Cary Weigand, Jacksonville, Oregon
- Courtney Murphy, Helena, Montana
- Adam Welch, New York, New York
- Darien Johnson, Buffalo, New York
- Kala Stein, Alfred, New York
- Meredith Host, Kansas City, Missouri



# aaron tennessee benson

Helena, Montana

CM: *What is it about clay, as opposed to some other material, that lends itself to the work you make?*

AB: I always start with clay. No matter what other media I add later, clay is always at the forefront, the center, the core. Clay is unique and physical. When constructing with clay, getting it under my fingernails, I really become a part of it. I like the physicality of clay, which requires a tremendous bodily effort on my part to work with it. Unlike other materials, clay comes in its rawest form, unrefined. I am responsible for its refining, and in this process, I come to know and understand the material. All other materials I use come “post manufactured.”

Clay has many unique qualities that make it very appealing

and useful for me in my work. It is unlike most other materials because of its ability to be readily shaped and molded. It adapts quickly to additive or subtractive techniques, to model or render, to build, construct, or design. It is the only three-dimensional material that can immediately reflect my desires, thereby giving me immediate feedback without the time-consuming process of redevelopment.

I make the clay component first, fire it to cone 04, and then use the other materials to give the piece some security. I still allow for a bit of tension via uncomfortable balance, visually opposing parts, juxtaposition of strong and weak appendages and hardware, or presenting an object outside of its normal context.



**Far Left: *A Man-made Sanctuary (Green)*, 24 in. (61 cm) in height, porcelain, wood, concrete, and steel, 2010.**

**Left: *Building Parameters XVI*, 26 in. (66 cm) in height, porcelain, wood, concrete, and steel, 2010.**

# douglas peltzman

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CM: *Can you explain some of the specific choices you make regarding the balance, scale, and movement of your surface patterns? Where specifically do they come from (if they have specific sources)?*

DP: I see the surfaces of my pots as an infinite and imagined space where my inspirations collide and coalesce. My forms and surfaces are inspired by findings in architecture, science, modernism, design, geometry, and landscape. Lines, dots, dashes, color, and texture are counterpoised to create movement, tension, and perspective. I carefully compose these elements with an awareness of the shifts and permutations rooted in the act of making. My extensive glaze palette allows me to emphasize certain shifts in the arrangement of line, as marks are both blurred and enhanced by the gravitational movement of glaze. For me, creating functional objects with layered and active surfaces is an outlet for playful, yet structured investigation that allows my work to continually evolve and change.



**Above: Mugs, 3½ in. (9 cm) in height, high-fire porcelain with glaze and underglaze, 2010.**

**Below: Dinner and lunch plates, to 9¾ in. (25 cm) in width, high-fire porcelain with glaze and inlaid underglaze, 2011.**



# mike jabbur

Santa Fe, New Mexico

CM: *Do you worry, or have you received feedback, that the heavily sculptural forms of your work could discourage their use?*

MJ: I have received feedback on this subject from many people, all with varying perspectives. Most often, people tell me they enjoy the slight challenge of using my pots. This pleases me, because I strive for a meaningful interaction between the user and my pots, a complexity within the utility. Though sometimes people tell me they use one of my cups every morning, the idea of daily use rarely enters my mind. I want the use of my pots to complement moments of reflection that enhance our willingness, and even our desire, to pay closer attention to the way we use an object—probably because of our tendency to associate significant experiences with objects. I intend for my pots to reinforce the need for occasion, trigger our creative spirit, and serve as signifiers of our memories.

I often consider the same question you ask me from the opposite perspective, and I wonder whether the utilitarian aspect of my work inhibits its sculptural potential—and if so, how do I feel about that? As the maker, I examine my work from multiple viewpoints to keep my process challenging and exciting. Most of all, I want my pots to enter people's homes and somehow enrich their lives, to enhance meaning and bring joy.



**Above:** Teapot, 10 in. (25 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2010.

**Left:** Mug grouping, to 4 in. (10 cm) in height, porcelain, fired to cone 10 in reduction, 2010.

# angelique tassistro

Asheville, North Carolina

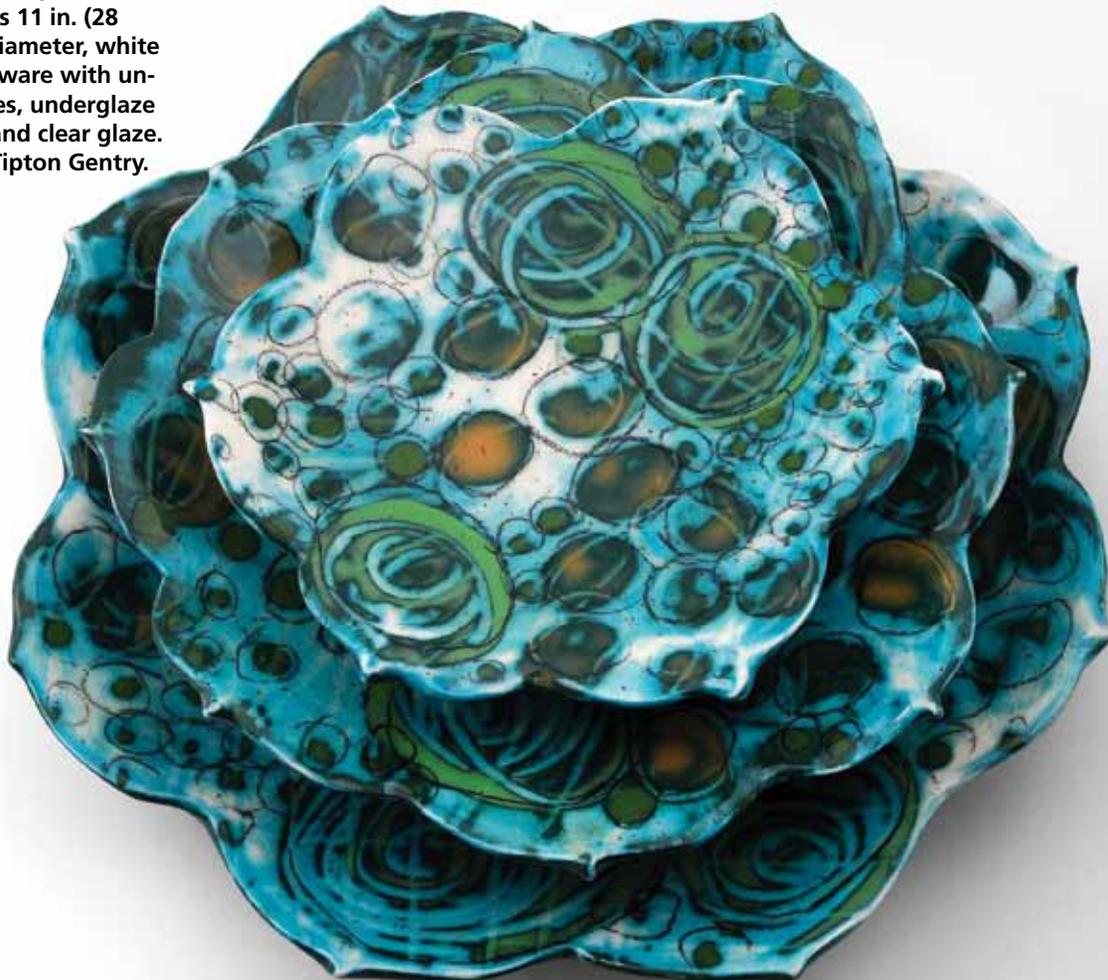
CM: *Is your process for developing your surfaces planned out methodically before you start, or is it more of an intuitive, make-it-up-as-you-go endeavor?*

AT: I came to my process for surface decoration by accident. My love of color inspired playing with underglaze, creating patterns by layering bright colors that were perfectly cross hatched into diamond-shapes, carved into, woven together with circles, swirls, and topped with tiny dots. If you can imagine a pink and green argyle sock with meticulously drawn patterns, then you get the idea.

One day, after working for several hours on a platter, I was applying the finishing touches when a large plop of color fell on the center of the surface. I had no alternative but to rinse it off and start over. When I put the platter under running water, the outermost layers washed away first, leaving the pattern blurred and faint, as if it had been painted in watercolor. I stopped mid-wash and let the platter dry. The organic shapes that appeared out of such a precise pattern fascinated me.

***The Three Spinners,***  
largest is 11 in. (28  
cm) in diameter, white  
earthenware with un-  
derglazes, underglaze  
pencil, and clear glaze.  
Photo: Tipton Gentry.

Over the next few months, I developed this wash-and-see-what-happens approach into a more structured method, utilizing the multiple layers of underglaze, precise carving into the surface, and then rinsing to diffuse the precision. Each piece has a five-color palette: The bottom layer is applied as a solid color and allowed to dry. Then a second solid color is applied and, while it is still wet, I quickly make hatch marks, circles, and swirls. Then all circles are filled with one color, all large swirls are filled with another, and all hatch intersections are topped with tiny dots. Once everything dries, the glaze is rinsed off with water, allowing the design to partially disappear, which results in a soft, painterly pattern. The pressure of the sponge and the force of the water from the faucet contribute to the look of the surface: alike but not the same. After the pieces dry, I go back into the design with a black underglaze pencil and outline the more dominant shapes, adding depth and detail. The final steps are to apply a clear gloss glaze, fire, fill with food, and enjoy.



# guy michael davis and katie parker

Cincinnati, Ohio

CM: *Can you talk a little bit about the collaborative nature of this work? How has it drawn from each of your individual works, and has it affected that work in return?*

GMD/KP: In the past two years, we have increasingly been invited to do more site-specific work, letting us brainstorm together outside of our studio world. This allows us to come into a space without any preconceived ideas of what to make, solve problems together, and rely on the other's strengths. We work in a state of constant critique, not only telling each other *yes* and building from nothing, but also telling each other *no*, and what we don't want to see.

The more pieces we began working on together, the more apparent it became that our skills and tendencies could be pushed to form something that neither of us could make alone. In our individual studio work, we both see how our collaboration has influenced the way we approach our own pieces.

KP: I feel that I am able to develop and push what is truly mine, and take that to a new level. I have started to deal with

form more, and crave sturdy objects as a place to hold my ornamentation. Even with my cut paper pieces, I now use the paper to build three-dimensional objects, rather than using it as an additional layer or a flat punch of color.

GMD: I am dealing with color a lot more, which I have not dealt with much in the past. I have a different way of approaching pattern than Katie, but it has started to become something I want for my objects.



**Above: *Illuminated Tumblers*, 5¼ in. (13 cm) in height, slip-cast porcelain with screen-printed underglaze, fired to cone 6 in oxidation, with China paint fired to cone 018, 2009.**

***Hanging Dead Project II*, 18 in. (46 cm) in height, slip-cast porcelain, fired to cone 6, with China paint and lusters fired to cone 018, branches fired to cone 10 in oxidation, and tails made of cut paper, 2010.**

# myungjin kim

Torrance, California

CM: *How do you develop forms, surface imagery, and narratives? What is your process and order for planning and constructing the close, complex relationships between them?*

MK: In my very early work, I began to draw still-life scenery across groupings of several vessels to create many suggested perspectives and surreal space on top of the real space of the dimensional vessels. I would do this without models, drawings, or plans, just an idea that grew as I worked. I build raw porcelain forms and paint much of the work black with terra sigillata. With very fine tools, I begin to etch and draw and remove the dark to bring the various parts of the narrative to life.

My later work, while incorporating much of what I learned from making the earlier *Still-Life Vessels* uses birds and animals for the human stories that I want to tell. I like the power that art has when it tells stories, and my narratives are personal, from history, and from what I observe around me.

**Right: *Reflection Series 1*, 20 in. (51 cm) in height, porcelain with underglaze, fired to cone 10 in oxidation, 2009.**

**Below: *Still Life Vessels with Birds*, 33 in. (84 cm) in length, porcelain with underglazes, fired to cone 10 in oxidation, 2008.**



PHOTOS: TONY CUNHA

# kip o'krongly

Minneapolis, Minnesota

CM: *Because you combine very specific narrative on functional forms, how important to you is the function of your work—or that people use it?*

KO: My ceramic work revolves around spurring conversation and communication; functionality and use are vital components of the process. I want people to touch the pots I make, to explore them, to use them, to gradually come to know them and bring personal meaning to the ideas they reference. Utilitarian pots provide a unique opportunity to inject information I hear, read, and talk about into one of our most intimate visual spaces: the home. This space is ripe for quiet personal reflection over a morning cup of tea from a thought-provoking tumbler, or energized by the presence of a dynamic handmade serving piece at a dinner party. While I certainly expect that this work will spend time removed from active domestic settings, I sincerely hope that it migrates often from the shelf out to the table.

Ultimately, my work is about asking questions—questions that motivate others to add their own voice to the broader conversation. I am aware that making pots will not solve the vast problems we face in our society today, but I do hope that the dialog and consciousness they encourage will result in steps, however small, toward a more healthy and sustainable future.

**Right: *Nuclear Cake Stand with Canary Cover*, 26 in. (66 cm) in height, coil-built earthenware, with slips, underglaze, hand-cut stencils, terra sigillata, and nickel silver wire, fired to cone 04 in oxidation, 2010.**

**Below: *Coal Train Tray*, 23 in. (58 cm) in length, handbuilt earthenware with slips, stain, sgraffito, and terra sigillata, fired to cone 04 in oxidation, 2010.**



# yoko sekino-bové

Washington, Pennsylvania

It has been sixteen years since I moved to the United States. As I grew older and stopped caring about all the small things that I used to worry about, translating one culture to another and uniting them within my limited vocabulary became my hobby. Then I decided to adapt this approach to ceramics. How can I create ceramic work that unites us, creates a bridge, and serves us all? Can I create craftwork that offers hope to people? Hopefully and possibly in a subtle, personal way?

This series is my quiet resistance against the current political situation in our time of isolation and confrontation. It seems like now, more than ever, we can use more reminders about how similar we are—things like small conversations—rather than abstract fear and anger. So my fake China teapots come with two sides: one has a Chinese/Japanese proverb, the other has the English equivalent (or a saying that has the precisely same nuance). It is my attempt to construct a little shaky bridge over the gap and start conversations about so many profound ideas we share even in different languages and cultures. I hope this series of work will be a good reminder to everyone that no matter the origin, things that appeal to us eventually become universal, if they have a good use. So please use my teapot to serve a cup of green tea, maybe from Starbucks.



**Right:** *Second Amendment Urn*, 10 in. (25 cm) in height, porcelain with sgraffito, brushed glaze, fired to cone 5 in oxidation, with luster, 2011.

**Below:** *Village Expert (Genuine Fake China Series)*, 5 in. (13 cm) in height, porcelain with sgraffito, carving, brushed glaze, fired to cone 5 in oxidation, with luster, 2011.



# peter christian johnson

La Grande, Oregon

CM: *Could you explain some of the technical challenges in building and firing your turbine forms, and how you overcome those challenges?*

PCJ: Beyond the usual challenge of minimizing warping and cracking during drying, these pieces have the added element of requiring a clay support structure or armature to displace their weight during firing. The complexity of these forms ultimately led me to begin sketching my ideas using a three-dimensional modeling program. This allows me to make precise measurements and troubleshoot weak spots. I then build a clay substructure that eventually becomes the surface on which the actual sculpture is constructed. Both clay forms are fired together and the substructure is discarded. For some pieces, the armatures themselves are fairly complicated but necessary to ensure any chance of survival of the actual pieces. I should add that all of the more complicated pieces are built on both a piece of sheetrock and a clay slab. The sheetrock allows the work to be slid safely into the kiln, and the slab ensures that both armature and sculpture shrink together. The clay slab is discarded and the sheet rock is burned off.



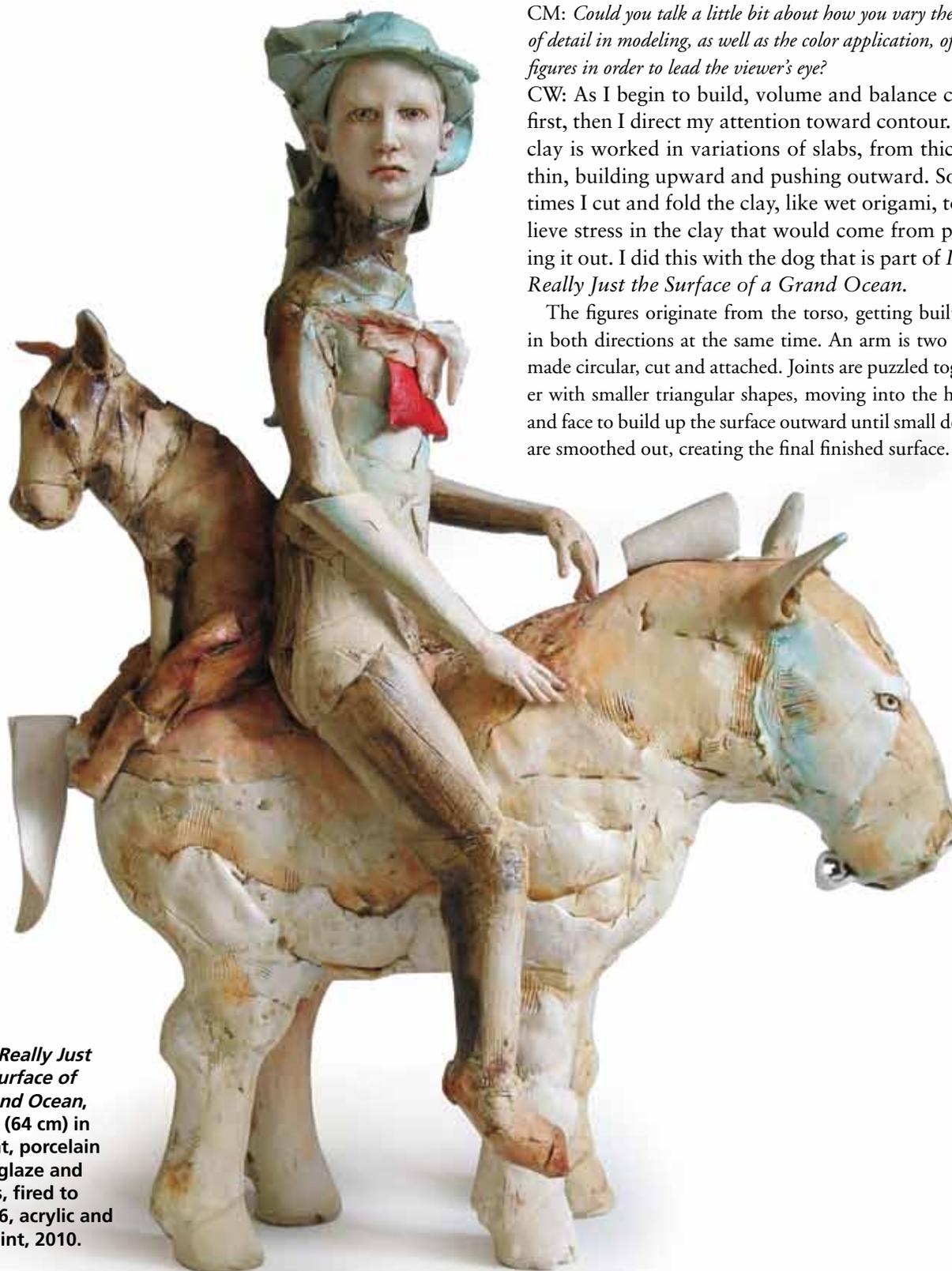
**Above: *Turbine #2* (Construction Series), 18 in. (46 cm) in diameter, terra cotta, steel, 2010.**

**Below: *Turbine #1* (Construction Series), 21 in. (53 cm) in diameter, white earthenware, 2010.**



# cary weigand

Jacksonville, Oregon



*I Am Really Just the Surface of a Grand Ocean*, 25 in. (64 cm) in height, porcelain with glaze and stains, fired to cone 6, acrylic and oil paint, 2010.

CM: Could you talk a little bit about how you vary the level of detail in modeling, as well as the color application, of your figures in order to lead the viewer's eye?

CW: As I begin to build, volume and balance come first, then I direct my attention toward contour. The clay is worked in variations of slabs, from thick to thin, building upward and pushing outward. Sometimes I cut and fold the clay, like wet origami, to relieve stress in the clay that would come from pushing it out. I did this with the dog that is part of *I Am Really Just the Surface of a Grand Ocean*.

The figures originate from the torso, getting built out in both directions at the same time. An arm is two slabs made circular, cut and attached. Joints are puzzled together with smaller triangular shapes, moving into the hands and face to build up the surface outward until small details are smoothed out, creating the final finished surface.

# courtney murphy

Helena, Montana

CM: *Is the restraint and simplicity in both the form and surfaces of your work something that you have intentionally cultivated, or has it developed more intuitively?*

CM: I've always been attracted to minimalism and simplicity. I was born with a sense of nostalgia for a time I never lived through. The textiles, artwork, and household items of the mid-20th century have always appealed to me. I am torn between a love for these industrially designed objects and an attraction to the handmade. I love the profile of forms from this time period, the graceful silhouette of an Eva Zeisel teapot or the beautifully irregular incised lines on a Lucie Rie bowl.

I appreciate a pretty wide variety of work, but am most drawn to forms that are well considered, graceful, and often quite simple, or quiet in some way. I am compelled by the details, the transition line where a spout meets the pot, the negative space inside of a handle, or a surprise drawing on the bottom of a plate. I like the sense of discovery that can happen as you become more familiar with a pot. It's a lot like getting to know a person better, as you hear their stories and the details of their life.



**Right: Two mugs, each 3½ in. (9 cm) in height, terra cotta with terra sigillata and majolica, electric fired to cone 01, 2011.**

**Below: Nesting set, 15 in. (38 cm) in diameter, terra cotta with slips, terra sigillata, and glaze, fired to cone 03, 2010.**



# adam welch

New York, New York

The brick paintings turn performative labor into objects. These works reference bricked-up windows, a holdover from the British “Window Tax” of 1696, paired with the mostly defunct practice of painted advertisements. The brick paintings are combinations of these two practices illustrating a further existence with linguistic potential. The paints are from the Martha Stewart Living collection, a symbol of culture, branding, and advertising. Stewart’s democratization of taste frees one from the trouble of having to establish one’s own aesthetic standard. Martha’s six-symbol methodology allows anyone, regardless of age, education, ethnicity, gender, or sexual preference, to create “a harmonious scheme and beautiful transitions.” Martha’s 12 favorites, called *Martha’s Picks*, are a selection of “only the loveliest colors.” Stewart’s soft and equitable palette brings a hopefulness and calm to an otherwise desperate and rigid existence.

**Right: *Running Shiners*, 16 in. (41 cm) in width, bricks, mortar, and paint, 2010.**



**Below: *Martha’s 12 and the Compliments*, 74 in. (1.9 m) in width, bricks, wood, and paint, 2010.**



# darien johnson

Buffalo, New York

CM: *Do you want viewers to investigate or try to make literal sense of the imagery you have altered to be unrecognizable on your work? Why or why not?*

DJ: My goal is to invoke a sense of curiosity by reorganizing mundanely familiar perceptions into a new context. It is not my intention to create a metaphoric narrative based on the symbolic relationships of these images; therefore it is not my concern that the viewer is able to discern a literal translation.

When one draws on a memory, it is pulled into our consciousness, analyzed, and reinterpreted; any alterations we placed on the memory become the new version that is stored. By repeatedly relying on the photograph to store our memories, we replace the true experience with a two-dimensional representation. The photograph itself is not a recent development, but the advent of digital photography has increased the frequency of its use with the Internet allowing for vast distribution of images and information.

I capture images digitally, which are then altered, cut, composed on the computer, and filtered through me and onto the work. Fractions of the original images form a new whole that would otherwise be impossible to perceive. The digital camera and computer have enabled me to create compositions and manipulate perceptions in new ways. Through this process, I present a fragmented distortion of visual experience with the intent of altering the viewer's perceptual awareness, rather than dictating specific content.



**Above Right: *G.Arch*, 5 in. (13 cm) in height, porcelain, China paint, string, acrylic, 2009.**

**Right: *Layered*, 15 in. (38 cm) in height, porcelain, China paint, string, acrylic, Plexiglas, 2011.**



# kala stein

Alfred, New York

My work is largely void of added decoration, therefore it is important that the forms I source from are iconic so they might be traced to a specific point in time, culture, or style. I reference archetypal ceramic forms chosen for their formal strengths and cultural significance. I abstract the sourced forms through sequences of drawing in silhouette, paper cutting, and digital rendering before I make the form in clay.

Slip casting with plaster molds, traditionally an industrial production and design process, is a way to make large editions of the same object. Typically, plaster molds utilize keys to register mold parts so the separate parts lock together the same way each time, resulting in the production of many identical objects.

I use molds in my studio with different intentions. I incorporate variables into my systems to create autonomous objects, not duplicates. My mold making process begins with a drawn paper silhouette used as a template to cut clay slabs. From the slabs of clay I cast "slices" of plaster, one on each side of the clay. The multiple slices are stacked and arranged, clamped or strapped between two end blocks and a bottom slab of plaster. The void is then filled with slip. In my variable mold systems, the parts of plaster do not lock together, therefore the mold is rebuilt every time it is used. As I rebuild the mold, I compose the look of the end object by the number and type of mold parts used, how they are aligned, spaced, etc. Each resulting piece is distinctly different each time I cast, challenging notions of process, production, and autonomy.

**Right: *Promenade* (8 units), 44 in. (1.1 m) in length, slip cast with variable mold system, fired to cone 4, 2010.**

**Below: *Triple Promenade* (2 units), 12 in. (30 cm) in height, slip cast with variable mold system, fired to cone 4, 2011.**



# meredith host

Kansas City, Missouri

CM: *How important is it to you that folks who use or look at your work understand that your surface patterns come from the “invisible and ubiquitous” patterns of quilted paper products?*

MH: I don't think it's necessary for the viewer/user to know that these surface designs are gleaned from paper towel and toilet paper patterns in order to enjoy my work. The patterns I use have a familiarity because of their occurrence in the paper products we use daily. We use them to aid us in making food, cleaning up after preparing food, and during the expulsion of food after consumption. I enjoy the idea of unsuspecting customers using my work. If one decides to delve into my work a bit more, they will discover another layer of information. Companies choose these patterns because of their connotations of domesticity and nostalgia. For example, these types of patterns are used in antique quilts as well as the pierced tin sides of a pie safe. Ultimately, this history plays into the sense of comfort and home associated with these patterns.



**Right: *Dot Dot Dash Dinner Plate*, 11 in. (28 cm) in diameter, porcelain with iron oxide decals, 2010.**

**Below: *Dot Dot Doily Mugs*, each 4½ in. (11 cm) in height, porcelain with iron oxide decals, 2010.**





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