Inversive Surface: Sub Counter Use

Curated by: Sherman Hall, H. Anderson Turner III

Scott Rench, Erin Furminsky, Scott Lykens, Kurt Webb, Marko Fields, Steve Hilton, Katie Parker, Laura Kukkee

August 5 - September 2, 2007

a ceramics invitational featuring the work of
Makers of ceramic objects love to talk about process and technique, which is how a lot of us get involved in ceramics in the first place. The joy of making and discovery draws us in, and we begin the steady, inevitable journey through the many technical complexities of ceramics. This often starts with a fascination with surface; we want to make glazes that will make us rich and famous (not realizing at the time that the surface alone does not have that power). The fact that we continue discussing the technical aspects of glaze and surface throughout our careers is understandable; there is a lot to know. But at some point, if we are to find our own voice and mature fully in our artistic pursuits, we need to get beyond the surface; under it, around it, through it, to the form and the content of the work. Traditionally, ceramic surfaces are meant to be in harmonious combination with form and function. This is a reasonable expectation for utilitarianware, and for many years (even while modern ceramic sculpture was coming into its own) this approach persisted, reinforcing the idea that ceramics was based in use and utility. And for many vessel makers, this remains true.

In this exhibition, we also began with surface, but we looked at artists who use surface and imagery to say something more complex, more personal — more than simply supporting the useful purpose of the objects they make — even when those objects are clearly meant to be useful. What we hope results here is a realization that the ceramic medium can be used to address ideas, topics and concepts beyond the self-referential discussion of the ceramic medium. Whether sculptural, utilitarian, or somewhere in between, the artists and works presented here have in common the ability to use surface as a means of starting a complex visual conversation that goes beyond the surface. And isn’t that what any good conversation should do?

— Sherman Hall
Editor

Ceramics Monthly Magazine

Laura Kukkee’s “Untitled,”
Two Part Vessel, Porcelain, Cone 6, 2006.


Kurt Webb's "Golem, A Clay Giant" (Living In The City Series), Soda Fired Stoneware (Coil Built Bottle With Cup Lid), 2007.
Subversive Surface: Counter Use, is of course a play on words referencing the often functional nature of clay. More than that, we have selected artists who are pushing the boundaries of the medium and working to develop a special meaning of their own. Some have a clear intent, while others work to offer up more subtle ways to effect change on surface and form. As a maker of ceramic objects myself, I know too well how the surface of an object can drastically change the piece one has been working on.

I want to thank Sherman Hall for co-curating this show and Joy Armstrong, the Eells Gallery director, for keeping it all moving forward.

— H. Anderson Turner III
Director of Galleries
Kent State University
School of Art

Steve Hilton's
"Tea For 47 (Detail)"
Scott Rench's "To The Victor Belongs The Spoils",
(One Of Three, Cheney) Porcelain And Laser Transfer
Ceramic Decals, 2007.

Erin's Furminky's "Nestle #4,"
Cone 6 Stoneware And 018 Decals, 2006

The Eells Gallery was created and made possible through William H. Eells, one of the founders of the Blossom Music Center and the first chairman of its Board of Governors. Given as a gift from William H. Eells, this gallery is named in honor of his parents, Hastings and Amy Eells. A new gallery was constructed and debuted the summer of 2003.