



Craft Contemporary to present *The Body, The Object, The Other*, its second clay biennial, in early 2020

January 25 – May 5, 2020



Top: Roxanne Jackson, *Metal Goddess*, 2017. Ceramic, faux fur, glaze, lace, and shell, 12 x 6 x 8 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: JSP Photography.

LOS ANGELES –Craft Contemporary announced today its second clay biennial, titled *The Body, The Object, The Other*, which will take place January 25 – May 10, 2020. This group exhibition features twenty-one artists whose practices reflect the expanding notion of figuration within ceramics.

All of the artists use the human body as their starting point to challenge traditional notions of representation, often going beyond the bounds of a recognizable figure. “The figure has always been present in ceramics,” co-curator Andres Payan Estrada points out. “These artists are questioning how the self can be constructed and refiguring their own relationships to the body and to clay.”

Exhibition co-curators Holly Jerger and Payan Estrada conceived of this year’s theme by looking back to the beginning of humankind’s relationship with clay, noting countless creation myths that assert humans came from earth. The recurrence of these stories throughout time and geography speaks to an inherent connection between the human form and clay, and the human need to understand oneself by molding one’s image to communicate thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Clay has the unique ability to both record the body and create an entirely new one. Thus, clay simultaneously acts as an extension of the self and an entity apart from the self, occupying the border between “the body, the object, and the other.”

“Clay is a distinctly malleable material and thus a medium particularly suited to broaden ideas of representation, whether physical, psychological, or political,” says co-curator Jerger. “The mutable nature of clay parallels



Top: Cynthia Lahti, *Brown Skirt*, 2013. Found image printed on archival paper, ceramic sculpture created by the artist, and wood, 15 x 8 x 9.25 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Cynthia Lahti.

Bottom: Jenny Hata Blumenfield, *The Vessel As Female* series, 2018. Site-specific installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Simone Niquille

the blurred boundaries of the self, and how the construction of the self can encompass many things at once, contradictory and fluid.”

With this elastic understanding of the self in mind, the artists included in *The Body, The Object, The Other* approach the theme through unconventional and oftentimes abstract means, drawing from postcolonial, feminist, queer, and craft theories. Ideas about the body are overlapped with performative expectations and issues surrounding identity.

Echoing this sentiment is the 2019 series *A Vessel is a Body is a Skull is a Mask* by Anders Herwald Ruhwald, which explores the shifting meaning of the vessel through the lens of language. The artist’s series presents no known quantities—rather, the dynamics are constantly transforming so that the object becomes the subject, the viewer the viewed, and the self the other. Jenny Hata Blumenfield’s 2019 series *The Vessel as Female* plays on a similar theme, comparing the ceramic vessel to the female and critiquing the equivalence alluded between the two in the Western classical canon.

Indeed, several of the artists included in the biennial challenge the Western art historical canon both by referencing it directly and by exploring the marginalized histories outside of it. Other artists, such as Jason Briggs, Roxanne Jackson, and Meghan Smythe, incorporate ideas about the “other” into their practice by fully embracing forms that can best be described as grotesque or abject, evoking monsters, severed body parts, and the non-human.

Just as important a theme as the body itself is its trace—the evidence that it had once been present—with clay serving as a tactile, visceral reminder of the body, visible in the smear of a handprint or in the built texture of a surface. Several exhibiting artists use clay as physical documentation of the performative gestures of their bodies, including Brie Ruais, Nicole Seisler, and Cassils. Seisler will create a site-specific wall drawing titled *Preparing*, part of an ongoing series, with marks made entirely by the artist’s repetitive actions of wedging clay. Cassils will present the sound installation *Ghost*, 2019, which captures the exhales, grunts, and breaths of the artist as they wrestle with a 2,000 pound block of clay.

The Body, The Object, The Other will be installed throughout the entire museum, and brings together a selection of works created over the past decade as well as new works specifically produced for the occasion. In addition to sculptural objects, the exhibition also presents several site-specific installations and performative works.

Participating artists are: Alex Anderson, Jenny Hata Blumenfield, Jason Briggs, Cassils, Sharif Farrag, Nicki Green, Phyllis Green, Raven Halfmoon, Roxanne Jackson, Anabel Juarez, Cynthia Lahti, Galia Linn, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Gerardo Monterrubio, Brie Ruais, Anders Herwald Ruhwald, Nicole Seisler, Meghan Smythe, Cammie Staros, Wanxin Zhang, and Bari Ziperstein.



Top: Nicole Seisler, *Preparing*, ongoing series. Site-specific drawing, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Esteban Pulido.

Bottom: Nicole Seisler, detail of *Preparing*, ongoing series. Site-specific drawing, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Esteban Pulido.

PRESS PREVIEW

A press preview with curator Holly Jerger and exhibiting artists will be held on Thursday, January 30, 2020 from 1 – 3 p.m.

OPENING

An opening reception for *The Body, The Object, The Other* will take place on Saturday, February 1, 2020 from 6 – 9 p.m.

PROGRAMS

Ceramic Beads:

A CraftLab Family Workshop

Sunday, January 5 | 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

\$10 adults / \$7 children / Free for members (includes materials and clay firing)

Learn how to create ceramic beads through a series of basic forming and shaping techniques. Workshop participants can contribute to an ongoing community bead project by artist Cannupa Hanska Luger, to be featured in *The Body, The Object, The Other*.

Curator Walkthrough:

The Body, The Object, The Other with Holly Jerger and Andres Payan Estrada

Sunday, February 16 | 2 p.m. | Free

Curators Holly Jerger and Andres Payan Estrada will be accompanied by exhibiting artists as they lead a walkthrough of Craft Contemporary's second clay biennial.

Body Memory and Clay:

A Wedging and Participatory Workshop with Nicole Seisler

Saturday, March 14 | 12 – 2:30 p.m. | \$25 / \$20 members

Join exhibition artist Nicole Seisler to learn about the basic principles of wedging clay as a means to discuss body language, learning, and labor in relationship to clay. Participants will also contribute to Seisler's evolving gallery installation and create clay wedged drawings on paper.

Gallery Talk:

Learning, Community, and Ceramics; Towards a New Pedagogy in Clay

Sunday, March 15 | 1 p.m. | Free

Hear from artists Julia Haft-Candell (founder of The Clay LA), Nicole Seisler (founder of AB Projects), and Mandy Kohlani (founder of POT) about how their various initiatives are furthering a more accessible, inclusive, and community-driven future in ceramics.

CATALOGUE

The Body, The Object, The Other is accompanied by a catalogue that includes texts and images detailing each of the twenty-one artists' practices. The publication will be available in the Craft Contemporary shop and online.

ABOUT CRAFT CONTEMPORARY'S CLAY BIENNIAL

Craft Contemporary inaugurated its clay biennial exhibition series in 2018 to highlight important contemporary movements in the ceramics field and recognize a diverse range of clay artists working in Los Angeles and nationally. An extensive slate of workshops, talks, and other public programs are presented in conjunction with the exhibitions. *The Body, The Object, The Other* has been organized by Craft Contemporary and co-curated by Holly Jerger, Exhibitions Curator, and Andres Payan Estrada, Curator of Public Engagement.

CREDITS

The exhibition is funded in part by the Antonia and Vladimer Kulaev Cultural Heritage Fund; the Los Angeles County Arts Commission; the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles; and the Bernard Kester Trust in honor of Edith Wyle.

Located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and inspire. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit www.cafam.org

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Friday, 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

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