

Adam Silverman

Punctum

November 9, 2019 - January 4, 2020



Untitled, 2019
Stoneware (ASM19-17-19.39)
18 x 16 x 13 inches; 45.7 x 40.6 x 33 centimeters

Philip Martin Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new stoneware pots by Los Angeles-based artist Adam Silverman. There will be a reception for the artist Saturday, November 9 from 6-8pm.

Adam Silverman's pots reveal the directness and energy with which they are made. A 25-pound block of clay is laid on a spinning potter's wheel, then "pulled" upwards by Silverman in a gesture that has sustained and fascinated humans for thousands of years. Silverman's gesture is one that has historically provided the means by which we store the items we need; at the same time, it is a gesture that through its simple beauty, and the elegance of its product, expresses who we are.

Adam Silverman's pots reflect the basic questions that continually draw us back to art-making. How are art objects made? Who makes them? Why? In Silverman's work, we see the evidence of the maker. His hands mold and push the clay during and after the throwing process. His tools - which are evident in the lines, forms and surfaces of these works - are picks and knives, sticks, and even baseball bats. His finishes are formed through multiple firings - with the pot in a range of orientations. Their colors are affixed in the molten heat of the kiln; their richly textured surfaces mark the path of the fire in that kiln chamber. Across these pots we see accretions of ash, and if we consider further, we see traces of the origin points of Silverman's glaze materials - the beach clay, corn husks, seaweed and the other materials that Silverman finds on the streets of Los Angeles, on the shoreline or in the woods in Rhode Island where he works in the summer.

In addition to asking basic questions about human expression, Silverman's pots reflect on Modernist ideas over a century old, such as truth-to-materials. The foot of each pot in the exhibition, for example, is the remnants of the 25-pound-block of clay from which it was made. Silverman is constantly experimenting with clay composition, form, kiln temperature, and finish. They sag and warp in unpredictable ways.

As the title of the exhibition suggests, before this show, Silverman thinks sometimes about the writing of French theorist Roland Barthes. After the death of his mother, Roland Barthes famously reflected on the unique power that artworks have - in his case a photograph - and how they strike viewers. Barthes comments that artworks have an intensely subjective effect, like a pinprick, or in his language, they have punctum. This deep connection between who we are, what we make and how we look at things is key to both the enjoyment and the critique within Silverman's work. As dean Nader Tehrani writes in his forward to Silverman's recent

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solo exhibition at the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York, it is "a refreshing advent to witness the punishment and brutality of a process that can yield aesthetic reappraisal while tipping it into critical discourse." Or, as Rose Slivka wrote in "The New Ceramic Presence" - her ground-breaking 1961 essay on ceramics in America - "Not unified by blood or national origin (everyone is from some place else)... we're a restless people." Slivka then goes on to say that, "By giving the inherent nature of the [ceramic] material greater freedom to assert its possibilities - possibilities generated by the individual, personal quality of the artist's specific handling - the artist underscores the multiplicity of life (the life of materials and his own), the events and changes that take place during his creative act."

Silverman's exhibition features a series of raised platforms designed by the Silverman. Formally educated in architecture and with a deep interest in modern dance, Silverman has studied Le Corbusier, Tadao Ando, and Merce Cunningham as much as Hans Coper and Peter Voulkos. In asking us to move our bodies through space, and by moving his works to our eye level, Silverman creates a direct relationship between us and his pots, enabling hopefully that sense of punctum for viewers - a moment of connection, reflection and critique.

Adam Silverman (b. 1963, New York, NY) received his BFA and B.Arch from the Rhode Island School of Design. Silverman's work was recently the subject of solo exhibitions at Cooper Union (New York, NY) and Curator's Cube (Tokyo, Japan). His work has been included in solo at such museums and galleries as Friedman Benda (New York, NY); Kimbell Art Museum (Fort Worth, TX); Laguna Art Museum (Laguna Beach, CA); Pierre Marie Giraud (Brussels, Belgium); and Tomio Koyama Gallery (Tokyo, Japan). Silverman's two-person installation, Boolean Valley, a collaboration with Nader Tehrani, traveled from San Jose Museum of Art (San Jose, CA) to the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, CA) to the Nasher Sculpture Center (Dallas, TX). In 2013, a major monograph on his work, Adam Silverman Ceramics, was published by Rizzoli. Silverman's work is in the collections of such museums as Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA); Nasher Sculpture Center (Dallas, TX); Palm Springs Museum of Art (Palm Springs, CA); Israel Museum (Jerusalem, Israel); Rhode Island School of Design Museum (Providence, RI); and Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven, CT). His work has been discussed in such publications as Artforum, Wallpaper, Architectural Digest, The New York Times, and Los Angeles Times. Silverman lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.