

Adam Silverman's 'Ghosts' in a peephole: Old souls captured in clay, battered but still standing

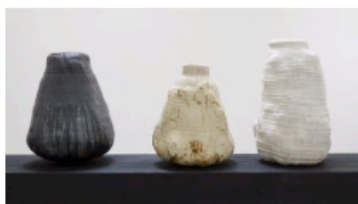
By DAVID PAGEL NOV 27, 2017 | 11:00 AM



Installation view of Adam Silverman's "Ghosts" at Cherry and Martin in Los Angeles. (Jeff McLane)

The 14 clay vessels in Adam Silverman's exhibition at Cherry and Martin in Culver City look great from far away. They look even better up close.

From a distance, their silhouettes stand out: rough and tumble contours that bespeak the bumps and bruises accumulated on rides through life. Hell-and-back resilience — or through-the-wringer elegance — takes solid shape in Silverman's stoneware sculptures.



Adam Silverman's sculptures at Cherry and Martin: Some punched from the inside, others recalling geological formations. (Jeff McLane)

From up close, their wildly variegated surfaces come into focus: vigorously worked landscapes whose nooks and crannies bear the traces of various actions.

Some have been punched out from the inside, as if each were a boxer's speed bag that had internalized the trauma it had been designed to absorb. Others evoke the flick-of-the-wrist swiftness of gestural painting. Still others recall

geological formations and the eons needed for their accretions to be seen.

If a meteorite and a medicine ball mated, their offspring might resemble these sculptures, whose gnarly beauty inspires complex emotions and evokes multilayered associations. Cannon balls, battering rams and armor helmets come to mind. So do seed pods, egg sacks and saddlebags — as well as wine jugs, light bulbs and ocean-bottom artifacts so encrusted with barnacles that their original shape has vanished.

The immediate appeal of the works in “Ghosts” intensifies over time, growing deeper and more resonant as each piece rewards visitors with nuances that make you want to look even more closely, from every angle and place you can find in the modestly scaled gallery.



Silverman's installation: The wall cutout that for a split-second creates the impression of a mirror. (Jeff McLane)

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To facilitate that forth-and-back dance, Silverman has cut a big round hole in the wall between two galleries and, using 50 cinderblock bricks and four massive planks, built a temporary display table that runs right through the hole, from one end of the newly united space to the other.

The setup makes you do a double take. First, you assume you're looking into a mirror. In a split-second, it's obvious you're not. And then it becomes clear that objects (with weight and volume) are fundamentally different from images in mirrors (or on devices). Silverman's industrial-strength peephole takes that idea and runs with it, giving visitors so much to savor that you'll want to revisit “Ghosts.”