

Adam Silverman at Cherry and Martin Gallery

by Neil Goodman

The New Art Examiner is pleased to welcome Neil Goodman as our Los Angeles correspondent. He will be keeping us abreast of the art scene in Los Angeles and Southern California.

I love a beginning. The first note, the first line, the first verse, the first time we meet a friend. We often remember where we started and, in that first moment, we act on our instincts. Exhibitions are like that. We tend to like them or we don't. First impressions make a lasting impression and, if a measured understanding of the work gives breadth and depth to our feelings, we still return to the beginning. I immediately liked Adam Silverman's ceramic show at Cherry and Martin Gallery in Culver City, California.

The installation was striking, easy to negotiate and memorable in both its simplicity and clarity. The ceramic vessels were uniformly placed along a long wooden plinth that traversed a somewhat irregular hole cut through a gallery partition wall. The partition hole both framed the exhibition and created a perceptual illusion of an endless vista of pots. This hall of mirrors effectively drew the viewer into the space and gave us the hook, so to speak, with which to engage with the individual works.

The right theatrical mix shows us that the artist has absorbed the lessons of history with perhaps a nod to Gordon Matta-Clark or Yayoi Kusama. In an age where artists are increasingly pressured to become more bombastic in order to be noticed, Adam's exhibition neither overwhelms nor underwhelms the work and creates a measured balance between object and installation.

Adam is a ceramicist who aligns himself with a long and well-traveled tradition of studio potters. I felt the impact of Japanese and Korean folk pottery as well as of a host of other ceramicists, including Shōji Hamada, Peter Voulkos, and George Ohr.

If the presentation of the work is the skeleton, the bones of the show are the pots. Adam deftly explores texture and color. The matte glazes accentuate rather than overpower the forms and help the objects achieve the right mix between volume and surface. The color tends to be largely monochromatic, and there is a



Adam Silverman, *Untitled*, 2017, Stoneware and glaze, Installation view.

certain black and white viewing of the show when taken as a whole. Like ice and snow over rock, in "Untitled 1," the glaze seems frozen over the pot, a viscous memory of a moment.

In *Untitled 2*, the clay encapsulates volume, capturing the invisible with the permanent as the interior void animates the exterior shape. In all cases, surfaces and shapes bear the imprint of both his hand and the glazes. The comfortable domestic scale of the objects heightens the intimacy between viewer and object, and like the installation, the vessels have a certain confidence and ease, yet also a lingering complexity.

Like its predecessors, the vessel is a given, a three-dimensional canvas of the hand. The softness of clay naturally records touch, imbedding each mark with the personality and characteristics of the maker. Clay bears witness, and constructed pots are in many ways like handwriting, specific to each person. They

connect us to a world where function shaped form and reaffirms the value in looking and living with objects that bear the imprint of the maker. This collective ceramic history is imbedded within Adam's work, yet his voice remains uniquely and powerfully his own.

I see exhibitions as thoughts, platforms to summarize your work, mark your progress, and make the tough decisions that allow you to move your work forward. Reviewers ask questions, subjectively interpret the work, and act as another voice. As a reviewer who very much enjoyed Adam's exhibition, my question would concern singularity and multiplicity, whether more is better, or whether the quality and clarity of the pots, independent of the installation, would create and sustain the same visual impact. My feelings meander between the two, and perhaps seeing the work in multiple settings would answer some of these questions.

In the end, we return to the beginning. The framing of the work circumvents the questions of art versus craft. Adam aligns himself with a contemporary approach to installation and presentation. "Originality" is linked with quality, a judicious consideration of form and surface, and a sustaining belief in the value of the hand. This is somehow the essence of the potter: to touch our world, leave our mark behind and preserve our connection to a world that many of us no longer know. ■

Neil Goodman, (Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts) is a sculptor with a long exhibition and teaching history. He is currently preparing for a large-scale sculpture retrospective at the Museum of Outdoor Arts in Denver, opening next fall. He divides his time between studios on the central coast of California and in Chicago. He holds an MFA from the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia.



Adam Silverman
Untitled, 2017
 Stoneware and glaze
 ASM17-14-327
 16.5 x 12.5 x 12.5 inches, 41.91 x 31.75 x 31.75 centimeters



Adam Silverman
Untitled, 2017
 Stoneware and glaze
 ASM17-32-346
 (detail)