

HOLLY HUNT ART

BIOGRAPHY

The work of Zachary Weber (b.1997) engages with possibilities of aesthetics, materiality, and spatial awareness. Between a playful and serious engagement, Weber harnesses materials to mine at sub-conscious curiosities. Employing a diverse array of mediums from porcelain to spray-paint, techniques and gestures compound to articulate a resolve that questions the boundary of the physical and the two dimensional. In the largest sense, his work takes aim at understanding why we understand what we see.

Born and raised in Chicago, IL, Weber began his creative pursuits at an early age, walking around the city, gleaning materials from sidewalks and utilizing them into his paintings and wall sculptures. These actions would later follow him during his educational forays into photography and sculpture. Weber is a merit scholarship recipient from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), BFA (2021). The artist has exhibited in institutions such as Art Miami, 2022, with Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, The Art Center of Highland Park, IL (2022), and is collected by the likes of Frank Stella and Black-stone Inc.

The artist currently lives and works in Chicago, IL, continuing his explorations within material under-standing and the world at large.

ARTIST STATEMENT

"My history with ceramics began with an elective pottery class I took in ninth-grade because I needed an arts credit. It was there I was taught the importance of functional vessels. How a rim on a coffee mug can 'ease the way one rests their lips' or how a teapot spout can be designed to prevent over dripping, were all formative objectives in their relation to the user's experience. I was beginning to accept craft as the profession of maximizing utility for the sake of the consumer. But in making these objects became also a negotiation between elemental differences within the work itself. A mug is considered a cup with a handle; a bowl, simply a wider cup with a continuous curve; and vase, only a tall cylinder. Yet, there was something I found deeply universal about the vessel itself and the attempt at subtle adaptation. All pots, after all, began with a lump of clay.

It is clear that our relationships with vessels (and all its manifestations and quirky idiosyncrasies) are ancient and integral in understanding who we are. Histories are pieced together by the fragments of pots discovered at dig sites; where rediscovery takes the form of foot-rings and contents hidden under ceramic preservation lids. In most ways there are clear evolutionary dependencies on the vessels' potential to contain and preserve who we are.

My work deals with the metaphor of 'vessel' but it is alright if you see them as pottery. Even though our use of vessels have real consequences in the way we interpret the world, it is not often that there is a pause of use for the sake of questioning what we are using. I attempt to make work that carries the potential for users to engage with the qualities of containers. I disassemble, replace, remove, and reattach material from familiar forms: cylinders and orbs,

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cones, and planes. Inscriptions, patterns, and geometric motifs are produced to emphasize what has changed, where. I use color and inscription as a means to liven and restrain the visual interplay of one element and another. With adding gold, my purpose is to distinguish a symbolic hierarchy of elements in each work (like thrown bits of clay dented onto the form, or polka dots on particular features). But this engagement of value with the use of gold is always purposely misleading and seductive, because what I choose to treat with the precious metal is random and formally indistinguishable from synonymous elements.

I see my process as an emergent dance of improvisation and experimentation at all levels of construction. Decisions are made on top or underneath one another, scratched out ferociously, and/or added intuitively and methodically. My work is an anthology of the aesthetics of my own thoughts. Perhaps it can only be such.

Negative space is significant in referencing specific use. For example, the amount of space for one's finger(s) to grasp a handle, provides more or less utility in performing the act of drinking, or how much drink can be contained. Likewise, I attempt to use shapes cut from sections of the original to signify a reinterpretation of how one might use a vessel. The cutouts may advertise a void or windows into the inside, so one might look inwards. I want to allow for visual opportunity, not just within the surfaces and colors, but within every aspect of the work as seen. I mostly see them as blatant denials of physical function, and am ignorant of the potential of physical contents.

The hollowness is an inescapable aspect of what is revealed after removal. Perhaps the work was not meant to be cut from. I just do it anyway. The cutouts are in essence illustrations for 'what was there before'; planes of two-dimensional transition from one location to the next.

I want to confuse and complicate the evidence of such cutouts. Sometimes a square will be sliced into two triangles, one hidden on the inside and the other, perforating the outside. Other instances, I will take the geometry of a circular cutout and render it back into formlessness. I want to treat each removal as an individual and abstract accessory to the form in its entirety, and flirt with the temptation of excavating where they came from.

I want to make work that is frustrating on the eye. Patterns so often are disrupted by unintended topography or glaze, or are simply left incomplete. To think about completion depends on the time it takes to finish a work. It is always a practical decision. I try to work on three to five at one session, but find myself racing against evaporation rates. If a work becomes too dry too soon, I am forced to accept its finality before being fired. However, glazing seems endless in the genesis of color and finish.

There is a clear, linear progression between start and finish even though the process can at times be arrhythmic. My guess is this is the case for any endeavor. First is the creation of the initial form, then the expressions of drawing, removal, and undercolor. Next is an interim period—a drying stage—where the work sits vulnerable to the elements of the studio (fluxing moisture levels, vibration, or other acts of god). The third step is the first firing; the sculptures strengthen and I am able to freely apply glaze. Lastly, the work goes back into the kiln for none to several treatments of additional glaze or luster. It is here I begin to question if the work is finished.

William J. O'Brien, my professor at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, introduced me to the process of 'letting go' of sculptural standards as they concern the ceramic arts.

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Instead of refining form to express ideas, I refined expressions through the handling of form and material. It was this duality that gave me a license to create fearlessly. Other influences on my work include Sterling Ruby's Basin Theology, the mysterious paintings of the young and late Bob Thompson; Eva Hesse, and Agnes Martin's studies of grids. Jazz music is inspiring in its synthesis and repetition. There is a visual dimension I see visually and formally, often transcribing what I can into the surfaces of my work. Experimental minimalist art is profound to my practice. Artists such as Steve Reich and Terry Reilly pushed the idea of progression into stunning arrays of pseudo-psychedelic movements. John Cage and the Traffic works have influenced my acceptance of finished works along with beginning new ones."