ERIN B. FURIMSKY'S THEORY OF ART:
A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF MY
CERAMIC ART

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree Masters of Fine Arts in the

Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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Extracting elements from historical ceramics to contemporary design objects I overlap and reconfigure. I am drawn to subtle and detailed components in objects that are familiar. I am investigating the attraction to these elements and their social role. The ceramic forms I create are informed by our relationship with the functional objects that we continually interact with, and the underlining content of the design of these objects. Deep-rooted ideological structures are translated into the world of "things". I look at familiar domestic objects, a vase, an iron, or an element of architecture for insight when building. In the finished product only parts of these references remain clear. The forms recall memories of many objects and eras.

My focus until this point has been on functional vessels, and I still have a strong interest in this realm. My current forms refer to function without divulging a recognizable specific use. They seem familiar, as if their use is prescribed; yet upon closer inspection you can not determine its purpose. Is the form a functional vessel, a component of a larger object, or a purely decorative form? It invites a closer look.
Surface and pattern are essential to my work. Detailed floral imagery is expected on delicate chinaware, but what happens when the same pattern envelops a swelling boxy form? I use familiar patterning, reminiscent of wallpaper and fabric, in order to make this odd object seem comfortably approachable. Many decorative arts are overtly useful, yet have delicate decoration that can barely withstand the rigors of daily use. With these objects and their accompanying bathroom installation I am exploring the relationship in ceramic arts between luxuriously ornamental wares and objects with specific, essential, and necessary functions. I am investigating the space between function and ornament, and the shift that happens when decorative becomes function.
Dedicated to Tyler Lotz.
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CHAPTER 1

INNOVATIVE USE AND DECORATION

Extracting elements from historical ceramics to contemporary design objects I overlap and reconfigure. I am drawn to subtle and detailed components in objects that are familiar. I am investigating the attraction to these elements and their social role. The ceramic forms I create are informed by our relationship with the functional objects that we continually interact with, and the underlining content of the design of these objects. Deep-rooted ideological structures are translated into the world of "things". I look at familiar domestic objects, a vase, an iron, or an element of architecture for insight when building. In the finished product only parts of these references remain clear. The forms recall memories of many objects and eras.

Ceramic vessels and figurines made by skilled artists have long been collected, displayed, and used in homes. I am interested in the type of ceramic ware that became very popular with the middle and upper class society in England during the 17th and 18th centuries and how this ware affected their lives. Does sipping tea from a Derby porcelain teacup transform you into one of the social elite? Often they are used in relation to a
ceremony or to create a special occasion. I look at the characteristics of these pristine 'fussy' objects to inform my own work. The detailed and delicate handle relates to a cultural refinement that is often associated with the eighteenth century and women. In certain aspects of my work, I there is a connection to this history.

I have recently shifted from making functional to nonfunctional work. The domestic use of functional objects has always been of great interest to me and led me to make vessels. Creating a connection between my work and domestic objects became more important than the vessels actually being used. I realized that my pots were going to become centerpieces or objects of display. Once I came to terms with this it was easier for me to let go of the functional forms.

The evolution of current work is very dependent on my exploration of vessels. Researching how they operate in the home, different cultures, and a society has been very important for me. I became interested in ceramic forms for specific uses, such as chamber pots, ceramic pillows, patch boxes, wig stands, and various medical ceramics. The odd and peculiar shapes of these specified historical vessels fascinate me. I made more contemporary versions of vessels for precise items, for example birth control devices and engagement rings. I became concerned these vessels were too contrived and loaded, but was still intrigued with the notion of unique uses for a form.
In the past I made vessels which had ornate features and exaggerated proportions, associating them with a ceremonial situation. I emphasized qualities that accent the detail of the form and elegance of the surface. The user connects with the ornate form on a different level when compared to common utilitarian vessels. The design of the vessel is based on function, but the elaborateness of it causes the user to question the utilitarian role of the object. For example, you may wonder if there is actually butter under the grand dress-like form (see Figure 1). What role does such an embellished butter dish/vase play? Is it questioning the disguise of female fat or simply a playfulness that may create a joyful moment whenever users simply butter their toast?

My forms have sometimes been the result of creating vessels with specific functions or to contain certain items. The piece evolves around that object and the role that object plays in society. For example, I became very aware of the emphasis placed on the engagement ring when I got engaged to be married and created a vessel for this object (see Figures 2 and 3). To contain such a meaningful ring, I created large majestic vessels to hold this single precious object. Marriage is associated with the home/house; therefore the forms reflected architecture. The idea of creating celebratory vessels for objects that has traditionally been tucked away or hidden, like birth control, are also
intriguing to me. These forms called for even more ornate settings, niches, creating a backdrop for the vessel, and a border that recalls lace. The specificity of the function reveals a theme that amplifies the eccentricity of the vessel.

Functional forms exist in the domain in which I exist, the domestic. They operate in our daily lives reflecting and reinforcing comforting aspects that we need to feel. They have a purpose, are made to fulfill very basic needs like storage and containment. The vessel forms are often dictated by their function; for example, boxes with divided little compartments for pills and sturdy dinner mugs made to survive the harsh life in a restaurant. Upon closer inspection, these ceramic forms and their surfaces speak of more than just function. Some pillboxes are sweet and decorative. They are made to be precious, by using porcelain with floral decals. This pretty little box protects you from the dismal fact that you take pills every day. It is as if the vessel sugarcoats the pills making them more tolerable. In the proper container, the pills can be seen sitting out on the counter. This is accepted, while rows of plastic bottles labeled with long and menacing medical terms are not. In restaurants, thick white dinner mugs speak of sanitation to the doubting customers. The sturdy, dependable, no frills, mug has a sort of stable utilitarianism that speaks to our nostalgic notion of blue-collar democracy.
Emphasis placed on beauty and hygiene during the 17th and 18th century created a need among the wealthy class for elaborate containers to store make-up, ointments, and scents. Getting ready in the morning took hours and became a ritualistic event. Women wore elaborate corsets and garments restricting and controlling their physical movement. When worn, these forced a posture and appearance that was essential to their sense of control and reflected their status. Everything was elaborately packaged and presented, people, food, and products. Bathroom sets became highly treasured and cherished object, made of silver, exotic woods, and porcelain. These were presented as gifts to women on special occasions. In the bathroom at the Acme Gallery, I translated qualities intrinsic to these small vanity items and expanded them to monopolize the entire bathroom.

My vessels are also concerned with presenting themselves in order to create an event when using them. When interacting with my work, you may feel connected to a fantasy, a bit like theater. Do you physically approach the vessel differently, raising the lid gingerly to reveal something cherished? A covered jar creates curiosity and a sense of temptation. The object contained is seen as precious because of its presentation. The refinement of the form and the painstakingly detailed ornament makes you realize that it is less every day, less ordinary.

Here she addresses how the weight and scale of a cup can alter your demeanor.

It was not enough to display refinement in clothes and consumer goods, the body was on display and was required to conduct itself with seamless grace and delicacy, whether female or male. The new ceramic goods and the practices associated with them encouraged controlled and delicate management of the body. The new hot drinks and china vessels were so expensive, and had to be handled with care. It was important for people who wished to gain entry to polite society to learn how to handle these goods and consume their contents with elegance. (97)

These wares are considered to be beautiful and precious, made with translucent porcelain, delicate floral paintings, and gold lusters. I reuse these elements and carry over some of their associations onto my more contemporary forms.
CHAPTER 2
SCALE AND PROPORTION

In the past I have explored the concept of making vessels that have specific use. In that work, my relationships to the object contained dictated the form of the pot. In my current body of work I have reversed the equation, creating forms that seem to have a specific purpose, but do not have a utilitarian function at all. Visually these forms became less and less related to function. Oddly enough, it is important to me that they seem related to that world.

This affiliation to the functional object dictates the scale of the pieces (see Figure 4). Utilitarian objects occupy the domestic environment. Working within these smaller dimensions my work can comfortably exist in the home where ceramic work is often examined through touch. This tactile investigation is fundamental to functional work. By keeping the scale of the objects within a size range that is easy to pick up and handle, I encourage physical exploration. The viewer not only encounters the visual scale but also the tangible weight of the piece. The scale is compact and sturdy. The forms are detailed and every area considered, but they are not delicate. The surface
affects how you interpret the object, by contrasting the grounded forms with ornate and
dainty embellishments. This alters the forms and they become more fragile. Therefore,
when holding the form you are not quite sure what to expect. The density and mass of a
piece tends to be a little more than expected.

When I held or looked at just one element of my past work, for example a lid, I
was intrigued and satisfied with that one component, as an object on its own. This new
body of work has evolved and the forms became simplified. I broke down shapes and
silhouettes and built unified compact forms.

My clay objects are less elaborate and more essential, focusing on volume, clean
lines, the profile from different sides, and the relationship of the space between the pieces
(see Figure 5). Unlike my past work, which was complex, composed of different and
distinct levels; feet, body, shoulder, rim, lid, the new forms are very contained with no
definite extension. There is no handle like you expect on a pot. Handles and knob that
are functional, add visual balance, inform you of how to interact with the work- without
these clues the work becomes ambiguous. This makes it difficult to know exactly what
and where these forms come from. Because they are smaller it seems like they were a
part of something else, an architectural remain (see Figure 6). They have a very solid,
impermeable, and well-constructed feel about them. The proportions are very condensed,
and contained they do not expand into space.
CHAPTER 3

VOLUME AND EDGES

Volume an important in every aspect of my forms. It is a force that pushes out from the inside, swelling some areas, creating a tension. Taking advantage of the clay's plasticity, I push the interior walls, expanding and inflating them. The volume creates a profile that changes every angle.

The volume affects how you relate to the form in a number of ways. You become aware of the internal space (see Figure 7). I feel the volume gives the forms vitality. It is like a person sitting straight up at the height of taking a deep breath, their lungs filled with energy. The domed and swelling forms draw you in to touch them. They do not seem hard, but soft and seductive like the curve of a woman's waist.

Pattern and ornament affect the volume. I enjoy how pattern works on top of the tight, distended surface. Like fabric stretched to cover an overstuffed armchair, or a corseted waist, the volume is crucial to the sensuality of the surface. Sometimes the pattern stretches and moves with the volume, but usually it seem to hold back the expansion.
The edges define and provide a structure. The edges act as a reference point for the swelling, pronouncing the form and containing the expansion (see Figure 8). This framework becomes a structure that contains the expansion. Where planes meet up, soft but clear angles are created. Unexpected volumes are created, unlike the rational symmetry of the potters' wheel. Most of the objects that inspire the work are sleekly designed with clear intentions, not lumpy or organic.

Edges become a location that I respond to with decisions, the volume may alter or a pattern may begin. A division of space is constructed by the edges. I react to some as if they form a reserve panel for decoration, while others may be ignored and the image or pattern wraps around the edge like paper on a gift.
CHAPTER 4

PATTERN AND SURFACE

As we walk through our lives, pattern and decorative motifs surround us everywhere. In the background, details go unnoticed: the intricate rhythms of wood grain, the connected patches in Grandmother's quilt, the faint floral pattern on the bedroom wallpaper. These subtle images fill our world, but are rarely examined.

I play with altering and recontextualizing patterns from history on my ceramic forms. Looking at nature and decorative motifs that reference it, such as those created by William Morris, I carve and paint stylized patterns of floral imagery onto the object. These cover the form like ivy vines enveloping the side of a brick building (see Figure 9). On pattern is defined by its relationship with the other. Sometimes they compete for attention, while other times they work together merging into a surface that is completely new.

A complex layering evolves by working the clay surface at every stage. Deeply carved patterns in the clay merge with the form and the decoration cannot help but become structure. Carved areas are covered with carefully chosen glazes. For one
pattern I may pick a glaze that runs, enhancing and over taking the carving at the same
time, while somewhere else a shiny transparent surface reflects the carving. It is difficult
for me to not be in control. Because of this, I play the unrestrained areas against very
precise and constructed sections of pattern. Carving through black or very dark under-
glazes causes the detailed image to come forward through the soft glazes (see Figure 10).
My use of different patterns may complement or set up tensions between the areas. I
paint scrolling leaves and floral sprigs and then solidify them with geometric fillings.
The surface has areas that are controlled and contrived at one point and then I let go of
that control allowing glazes to drip and slightly overlap in the glaze firing. This
relationship between different types of pattern is addressed in the preface of Pattern

Design an Introduction to the Study of Formal Ornament by Archibald H. Christie.

Close examination of formal ornament from the structural point of view brings
out a factor in its composition, which must be watched with special care; for
success in designing depends largely upon insight into its working. It must be
realizes that the beauty of a pattern is not due to the nature of its elements as to
the right use of them as units in a rhythmic scheme. Their posturing, runs,
staccato punctuations, strong and weak alterations, and so forth, so far from being
more or less accidental, are in reality calculated effects designed to appeal directly
to a rhythmic sense, normally so dormant that it is more by the breath than by the
observance of its subtle canons that we are aware of its reactions. (V)

Screen-printing enables me to lift patterns from historic wallpapers, fabrics,
tablecloths, and patterns from books and make direct images from them (see Figure 11).

These screened images give me a detail and density I could never equal if I replicated
them by hand. Translation of the flat screen onto the dimensional form causes the patterns to shift and blur in some areas but remain incredibly crisp in others. The results are very immediate. Decals sit on the surface of the colored grounds and allow the layering of one image onto another.

By starting with found patterns and altering them I am able to carry their associations from their original context. For example, I borrow the notion of the happy home in the fifties by using stylized flowers from tablecloths and popular dresses. I use wallpaper from the late 1700's because for the first time the bourgeoisie was able to decorate not just the rich and noble courts. This paper in turn mimicked in appearance the luxurious items such as Flemish tapestries, elaborate stucco, or marble decoration. The patterns shifted and became rich and ornate floral designs, relating to the concept of indulgence, and ceased bearing the moral or religious images of their predecessors.

Floral imagery is predominant in my work (see Figure 7). Flowers have traditionally been associated with women because of their fragility, beauty, and sexual connotations of abundance and fertility. In nature, flowers appear so frail, however they survive in the harshest of conditions, year after year. "In the mid-Victorian house they (flowers) were an essential element as well as a strong symbol of femininity, reinforcing the idea of the home as a feminine sphere" (Sparke 37).
The adornments always respond to the architecture of the form. The patterns may follow the rules created by the form and abruptly end at an edge. On the other hand, the surface may overtake the form by covering it completely. Some of the surfaces wrap around the form and overlap other patterns, breaking out of the anticipated plan. The layering of pattern alters what the pattern, form, and colors actually are. They may dilute or exaggerate each other when overlapped. Images occasionally pop up from behind a pattern. You may see a glimpse of a hand or a skirt. Sometimes these little narrative elements are camouflaged right into the pattern, merging with it.

I create elaborate and time intensive surfaces as a way of ornamenting my work. To me these vessels are more important with a detailed and luxurious surface treatment. I feel like I am clothing myself, deciding between a plan ordinary dress and a colorful, embroidered, frilly dress. With the embellishment of the dress, or surface, I assume we become more attractive.

As with the forms, I have felt the need to simplify the surface treatment. The two elements go hand in hand, because my surfaces are a response to the forms. If there are less components and angles to a form I do not have as much to respond with techniques such as banding and color shifting. There as also been a shift to subtler colors, not as intense or acidic. I use color to seduce in the same manner that a flower lures pollinating insects. By leaving some areas with a surface as simple as a white glaze, the patterns I do
use are much clearer and more potent. There is layering in the surfaces but there are also some quiet areas. Many of my references heap ornament upon ornament. I have an attraction to this, and am constantly attempting this over abundance of decoration with my own work. Recently I have pulled back from this point of over excess, akin to the Victorian restraint that heightens sensuality.
CHAPTER 5

THE DESIRE TO TOUCH

When someone walks into my studio and sees my functional work along side nonfunctional forms they are drawn to touch both types of work. Even referencing function gives people the undeclared permission to tacitly explore the work. This is a more intimate experience than merely viewing my objects. When building the forms, I carefully hold them, cleaning up and carving each and every section. They are small enough to gingerly rest in my lap

I feel this tactile experience with the work is important and want to encourage it with the viewer. Some forms call for physical exploration because the sensual curves create a natural place for the hands and you can encounter the weight of the piece. A thick satin glaze is an inviting surface to touch. I work the surface in the round so I can retain an element of surprise. Unlike a vessel there is no true bottom and the forms can change by sitting on different sides. The bottoms are rarely flat so there is a negative space peeking out from under the piece (see Figure 5). This allows you to see the carving
that has been done on the bottom of the form and provokes a desire for closer
investigation. It is an inviting space where you can place your hands and interact
physically with the work.

As the forms get larger it becomes more difficult to maintain this connection.

They leave the area of functional object and begin to pick up outside connotations. Some
of the surfaces are drier and less appealing to the touch. The fact that the forms were
grouped makes one less likely to only pick up one, while a single object is more likely to
be held. I placed the pieces on specially fabricated steel tables (see Figure 12). The
dimensions of the legs were thin; the top surface was glass and almost chest high. While
the glass made the work seem more precious and less accessible to casual touch it
allowed complete visual access setting up a tension again based on permission and
restraint.
CHAPTER 6

SINGLES AND GROUPS

At the show I grouped many of the forms, creating a relationship between the
pieces (see Figure 12). I explored a variety of formal ways to construct this association.
With one group I built the third sculpture as a hybrid of the first two. With another
group, I built a single element into each form, like an area that swells up then tucks under
on itself, to produce a connection between them. The forms respond to each other. Some
pieces look as though they emerge from the negative space of another, or the shape of the
glaze on one object echoes the profile of a partnering form. I am interested in how one
piece informs another and how to activate the negative spaces between them.

By working with sets of forms, I am referencing the collections that people
accumulate and display in their homes. To a collector, these objects are comforting and
cherished personal assets. I placed the work on shelves and glass tables, to reinforce the
notion of display. Collections have similarities and differences within each object. For
example, all figurines are the same types, but each one is doing something distinct, so the
individual pieces develop their own personalities. My collections work in a similar
manner. As a group the work references each other and produces a dynamic between the forms, or each piece can exist on its own. I think about the qualities a collection has that comforts and appeals to a person.

Objects in women's collections are frequently chosen for their domestic decorative potential or for sentimental reasons, not for the apparently disinterested reasons of systematic classification, scholarly interest or independent value..... Ceramic vessels are in the first place functional, but are made collectable by becoming special: for example, by being traded over distance, by demonstrating a special technology, by their association with a special person, above all by their form and decoration.... Similar but different pieces could be displayed together to create a unified whole, but the discriminating eye could enjoy each one separately. (Vincentelli 110-11)

The forms in each group are related, but the surface is what unifies. I use the same patterns, images, carving and glazes to create the surface. Within each piece these surfaces are placed in various locations. They are applied in response to the distinct qualities of the individual forms. By approaching the surface of the forms with the same pallete and in the same manner, I developed the related pieces.

By placing the forms in a variety of locations, in relation to each other and the parameter of the pedestal, I can analyze the different dynamics that occur. A sense of tension may arise between the forms. I do not choose to line them up in a row, so there is no precise and correct order. This sequence would appear like a museum archive or a store display. I want the work to become part of an environment where life takes place, where objects often shift and move.
When certain pairs are set facing each other, their dependency on one another is emphasized (see Figure 13). One becomes the active piece and the other is acted upon. Your eye keeps going back and forth between the two objects. On the other hand, three forms allows more negative space and you can spend additional time with the individual forms.

Although the tension generated when the forms are grouped interests me, they also operate on their own as individual pieces. Because my intention was to create them as a group, I wanted it to be very clear that this is how they function. To this end I choose to group and display the work on glass topped pedestals, to maintain that connection between them. Once the work was installed however, I realized the relationship between the objects was not as important as I had assumed. Grouping them somehow diminishes their monumentality making them seem more like parts of a whole rather than complete objects in and of themselves.
CHAPTER 7

MATERIAL CHOICES AND PROCESS

The historical associations of different clay bodies influenced the switch I made from earthenware to porcelain. The porous surface and chunkiness of earthenware did not render it the ideal clay for constructing a pristine object. It is often connected with folk pottery. Porcelain holds a special respectable place in Ceramic History because of its hardness, durability, translucency, white color, and degree of difficulty to work with. The white clay body speaks of purity, hygiene, extravagance, and refinement. When I do relief carving with porcelain the glaze reflects and enhances it. On the other hand, when I carved earthenware, I had to use white slip because the red clay body was too dark.

Porcelain fires to a hotter temperature causing the clay body to shrink. This affects the carving and it becomes even denser and more intricate. Also, the shrinkage is very stressful on a piece and cracks often appear when the work is fired to temperature. To control cracking it is crucial to build with technical accuracy. I must thoroughly slip and score every attachment, build with slabs that are the same working state, and always dry and fire the work very slowly.
My process is not intuitive and I often do a lot of planning before I begin. First, I will do a variety of sketches and build poster board maquettes. When building archetypes, I am more playful and less inhibited because they are not permanent like clay and do not have the same technical constraints. The maquettes are three dimensional so the information on how the proportions and the profile operate in a space are much clearer than in the drawings. Clearly the poster board does not have the same flexibility as clay and the sides are flat or only curve in one direction. These have a very different feeling, rigid and angular. They seem related more to mechanical industry and lose some of there the sensual qualities. I keep a number of these forms on hand and go back, responding to them at a later time.

Surface is important and the permanence of the process leaves little room for error. There are innumerable amounts of surfaces to try so it is hard to narrow down my pallet to a few glazes. It is easy for me to put too many surfaces on one form. The glaze lab is full of opportunities both good and bad and I am familiar with both. After the time spent constructing a piece, glazing becomes a risky process. Recently I have been exploring the use of matt and satin glazes when most of my former surfaces were highly reflective. The satin glazes have more depth and absorb the light creating a softer feeling. It is a challenge to have the glaze surfaces and colors work together. When glazing I must often respond to an under-glaze color that is already there. An opaque
sugary glaze next to shiny transparent glaze plays one off of the other, varying the depth of the surface. By layering the surface with carving, printing, and luster, I am able to give a dimension maintaining the feeling of cloth or skin without denying depth.

My work is mainly slab constructed with some coil building. I cut profiles out of paper, making templates to use as a pattern. Once I have the slabs in the desired shapes I begin attaching their edges or seams. Timing is everything when constructing my forms. If a slab is too wet it cannot support its weight, but if it is too dry, cracks will appear near attachments. It is crucial that I am aware of the material, to know when I need to get something done or when I should wait.

Carving is a repetitive motion that is both tedious and time consuming, yet I find this process gratifying. I enjoy how calming and intimate the activity becomes attending to all of the details. Pressing out all of the tiles for the bathroom was a process similar to carving. I feel this tenderness is evident when looking at the work. Because of the time and care I place into each piece, I become more engaged with the work. It is difficult to disregard something so fastidiously cared for and labored over.
CHAPTER 8

BATHROOM INSTALLATION

I am interested how ceramics relates to the body. Functional ware has a clear intimacy because it is handled and placed onto private spaces, like your lips. Ceramics plays a definite role in the domestic home, but it is the prevalent material in one room, the bathroom. Ceramic forms such as chamber pots, tiles, bathing tubs, commodes and the sink all exist in this space. Our bodies are always interacting with these forms that have been around for the sake of sanitation since the 1700's. The designs of these wares are incredibly sleek and sensuous but are rarely noticed because of their constant use. These forms also blend into the architecture of the room because we are so accustomed to seeing them.

By doing an installation in the Bathroom Gallery at the Acme Art Company as part of my MFA show, I addressed this private and intimate space that is full of contradictions: the necessary duty of expelling waste and the refuge of pampering. I treated this raw and personal space as the most lavish and culturally refined of public
rooms (see Figures 14 and 15). By transforming the room into a light and feminine space that is reminiscent of 18'th century drawing rooms it "shows off" the occupants. As with my forms, I wanted to create a feeling of refinement, but on a much larger scale.

I began this project with a number of ideas informing the decisions along the way. Creating a feminine space full of adornment was the prevailing concept. There is a history of defining an over decorated space as a women's' space. I am interested in the need for women to make things "pretty" in order to claim them as their own. There is a strong history of this being done with natural elements, such as shells and flowers, during the Victorian times. "The language of domestic comfort depended heavily upon its references to the natural world" (Sparke 34). I created swirling lines that were very vine-like. These tentacle forms wrapped around the room with the intention of taking over.

The idea of femininity strongly affected my choice of surface and color for the room. The pink that I choose was very neutral, soothing, and old. It was not over powering, like bright bubble gum pink that reminds us of a five year old girl. The shade is pleasant and flesh like. I used a warm, thick, satin glaze that still showed the detailed relief of the individual tiles. The glaze absorbed the light and delicate shadows were cast from leaf like tiles. The walls were painted the exact color as the glaze in order to see the faint color shifts in the tiles (see Figure 16).
The high ceiling was dramatically altered becoming an arch. I wanted to deal with every part of the room, just like I address every part of a form. The arch helped create a sense of space that truly encompassed you and wrapped all the way around. I used the arch to reflect light so there was an ethereal feeling to the space and no harsh direct light. Last, the form of the arch echoed the shape of a mirror that was placed on the wall expanding the embellished atmosphere. The mirror reflected the dense pattern that was on the opposite wall behind the toilet and the user/viewer would see themselves reflected with the ornate pattern behind them. The idea of reflection was also seen in the use of glass for the pedestals and the bottoms of the forms being reflected in the adjoining room.

Using a press-molded shape somewhere between a delicate petal and a feather, I covered the wall with over 900 porcelain pieces. These were small and engaging objects that retained the sense of intimacy even though there was a dramatic shift in scale by dealing with an entire room. Individually these are small palm sized, uncomplicated objects. The individual pieces cupped and interlocked each other growing into long swirling lines. I played with the subtle differences in the color and size of each tile, swelling and blending the swirls. On the wall these forms acted as high relief
architectural ornament, reminiscent of stucco and plaster relief. This ornament exists in an odd place, somewhere between a two-dimensional surface and becoming a three-dimensional object. They were dependent on the wall, but not part of if.

The bathroom installation dealt with an amount of surface and space that was much larger when compared to the small objects that composed the rest of the show. As a room it is incredibly intimate, as if made for one person. The embellishments of the room surround and encapsulate you in the space. There is a similar effect that occurs between the surfaces and the forms that were displayed in the adjoining room. The difference is that the room contains you, whereas you can contain the smaller forms. The installation is an environment that encloses you, while the objects create small compact environments for only themselves.

There are other similarities and differences between the bathroom installation and the smaller objects. The manner in which I responded to the room when installing the tiles was very similar to how I react when carving the forms. The pattern begins at the edge of a sculpture, just as the tiles begin to cascade from the corner of the arch and the source of the light. The difference is how these types of adornments react to their walls and sides. When glazing and carving the surface really merges and becomes part of the structure, while the tiles extended out from the walls into your space. You may think the individual pieces may fall off at any time as they move and swirl around you. There is a
difference between foreground and background. No matter how you look at the
bathroom walls, the ornamentation becomes a background. Any object or person in the
room is viewed in front of the wall. I used the mirror to emphasize this. On the other
hand, the objects on the glass pedestals operate in a three-dimensional space, usually
away from the wall and are viewed in the foreground.

The process of making this piece was much different than the process related to
the construction of the ceramic forms. There was only a certain amount of planning that
was possible. While there is a lot of decision making involved within every stage of
building a form, most of the decision making came during the installation of the
bathroom. I had to just trust myself and continue making the tiles. My energy was
focused on pressing out as many tiles as I possible. Once the remodeling and the arch
were complete I could respond to the space.

The space of the bathroom was integrated into the rest of the show because it was
adjacent to the Spotlight Gallery, which is also a small room (see Figure 17). I had work
on one large pedestal, a small pedestal, and a wall shelf in this room. There was a lot of
negative space around the work, so it was quiet, not cluttered or full. There was also
another large pedestal directly through the doorway of the Spotlight Gallery. This area
was partitioned off by a wall to configuration a more compact space. This structure of
separate rooms, opposed to a large open gallery space was important to the sensibility of
the work. Although the work was in different rooms you could see most of the show from nearly all locations. The division of space also referenced a domestic space. With these objects and their accompanying bathroom installation I am exploring the relationship in ceramic arts between luxuriously ornamental wares and objects with specific, essential, and necessary functions. I am investigating the space between function and ornament, and the shift that happens when decorative becomes function.
Figure 1. Butter Dress
Figure 2. Ring Vase

Figure 3. Ring Vase Detail
Figure 4. Pink Group, Form 2

Figure 5. Group 2, Form 2
Figure 8. Pink Group, Form 1

Figure 9. Green Form
Figure 10. Plumage Tile Detail

Figure 11. Silk-Screened Tile
Figure 12. Pink Group on Pedestal

Figure 13. Iron Pair
Figure 14. Bathroom installation

Figure 15. Bathroom Installation In Progress
Figure 16. Bathroom Detail

Figure 17. Gallery Installation
WORKS CITED


