From Brown to Blue: 
An Exploration in Singularity and Multitude

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Fine Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Jonathan Gordon Fitz
Graduate Program in Art

The Ohio State University
2014

Masters Examination Committee:
Rebecca Harvey, Advisor
Steven Thurston
Amy Youngs
Copyright by
Jonathan Gordon Fitz
2014
Abstract

This document is to describe the research I have pursued while in graduate school. I want to understand when and why materials collapse. I touch clay, move it through my hands, developing knowledge about how far I can push. Testing ceramic materials allows me to explore the interaction of colors and our perception. I’m interested in the way language describes color. Testing materials and retaining the knowledge means organization. I find patterns and organize things. I have an obsession to categorize.

The mold making and slip casting process provides me with the ability to produce a large quantity of things, building blocks with which to create a larger form. Humor is a quality I am looking for, it allows me to laugh and think differently about an object, opening up interpretations. I don’t ask permission to use a form; I take forms I’m curious about. I wonder how much I have to process an object to gain ownership over it? Can I shift materials or surface? I am looking for moments in my process that deny the intensely hand-made quality of my objects. I am drawn to the visceral aspects of making.

Discovery comes through refinement. The more I refine a process the more I understand each part and the subtle changes I can adjust to make the process just right for an object. When working in the studio there is not always a direct path or a route mapped out. I have slowed down, responding to the materiality of ceramics, considering the instinctual along with the chemical to produce objects.
To everyone who helped me along the way.
Vita

2006 to 2010.............................................Personal Assistant to Floral Designer Allan Woods
2008.................................................................................Studio Assistant to Brad Schwieger
2008..................................................................................Hochshule für Kunst und Design,
Burg Giebichenstein
2009................................................................................BFA in Ceramics, Ohio University
2009...........................................................Year Long Artist in Resident The Cub Creek Foundation
2009................................................................................Studio Assistant to Andrea Keys-Connell
2010...........................................................Year Long Artist in Resident Red Lodge Clay Center
2011 to present....................................................Graduate Teaching Associate, Department
of Art, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Art
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................ii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................iii
Vita ...........................................................................................................................................iv
List of Figures .........................................................................................................................vi
Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................1
Chapter 2: Experiential ........................................................................................................2
Chapter 3: Process ................................................................................................................5
Chapter 4: Making ...............................................................................................................8
Chapter 5: Testing ..............................................................................................................11
Chapter 6: Physicality ........................................................................................................13
Chapter 7: Complexity .......................................................................................................16
Chapter 8: Perception and Color .....................................................................................19
Chapter 9: Razor Sample V. 2.0 ....................................................................................21
Chapter 10: White Bread .................................................................................................24
Chapter 11: Blue Stripe .................................................................................................27
Chapter 12: Summation .................................................................................................29
References .........................................................................................................................32
List of Figures

Figure 1: The Mirage and The Rainbow.................................................................1
Figure 2: Feldspathoid Spectrum..........................................................................3
Figure 3: Rainbow for Donald Judd.................................................................5
Figure 4: Baby I got the Blues.............................................................................6
Figure 5: 112 Billets..........................................................................................8
Figure 6: Argillaceous Sequence......................................................................9
Figure 7: Water Line.........................................................................................11
Figure 8: Green and Grey..............................................................................12
Figure 9: Razor Sample V. 1.0.................................................................14
Figure 10: Blue Circle .................................................................................17
Figure 11: God and Adam.............................................................................19
Figure 12: Jesus Under Under Glaze...........................................................20
Figure 13: Razor Sample V. 2.0.................................................................22
Figure 14: Razor Sample V. 2.0 (detail).......................................................24
Figure 15: White Bread...............................................................................25
Figure 16: White Bread (detail)......................................................................27
Figure 17: Blue Stripe.................................................................................28
Figure 18: So Close You’re Almost Kissing...............................................30
Chapter 1: Introduction

For my thesis exhibition I produced three works *Razor Sample V. 2.0, White Bread*, and *Blue Stripe*. These pieces are each composed of multiple objects exploring their interactions with each other. This body of work explores and exploits the inherent nature of ceramic material and process. I focused on taking an object and manipulating it, starting with a recognizable form and altering it through process. The multiple is a way of further abstracting form, dislocating it from its individual identity. I am drawn to forms

Figure 1: *The Mirage and The Rainbow*
that make me laugh. Humor allows people to drop their guard, relax and become susceptible to new ideas. I am interested in subverting expectations of form through material and process. The final objects are conglomerates of phenomenology and form resulting in visual alchemy.
I work through material with a sense of intuition that comes from previous knowledge gained through experience. By spending time touching clay and moving it through my hands I have developed the knowledge of when and when not to touch, how far I can push it. I understand the limitations of materials and work with or against that through a series of tests. Testing materials requires a degree of control and organization, keeping notes organized and labeling test tiles. When I am testing materials I am trying to
push them to the edge of collapsing. Often this means melting. The forms bend and slump giving to gravity. Evidence of gravity is something I’m looking for in my objects, both the clay and the glaze pulling down. This is present in the Ray Guns on the side that faces down, the glaze pools and is significantly thicker. I have gained an awareness to gravity, it will always be present and it is something to work with or against. Even when I try to suspend objects so they can be glazed in the round there are still traces of a top and a bottom. The materials I work with succumb to gravity through their process, even the clay starts to become unstable and is prone to slumping. Gravity is an obstacle that I struggle with. I fire too hot or glaze too thick and things fall apart, materials are pushed too far. It was this initial technical challenge that excited me about ceramic materials. I wanted to understand when and why the material would collapse. The phenomenon of glaze melting has a direct relationship to horizontality, the presence of gravity in a work of art. Glaze helps me visualize the presence of gravity within my work. In ceramics everything needs a bottom, a place free of glaze to sit on the shelf. Even if the object is glazed in the round it has to be stilted or supported, this will leave marks, these marks with the shifting of glaze are the evidence of gravity and a top and a bottom to the object.

With the knowledge that ceramic materials when fired will want to slump or move down, I’ve explored different ways of working with gravity to produce an object. The orientation of my objects for casting and firing has to be considered to minimize or encourage warping, slumping, and twisting during the process. The stilts used in production of *Razor Sample V. 2.0* were built to suspend a Ray Gun with minimal points
of contact but maximum stability. The Ray Guns do retain evidence of this with three marks on the side facing down. The glaze is visibly thicker as it slides from top to bottom.

Looking at an abundance of objects I can’t help but connect them. I look at proximity, color, shape, and size. I want to find patterns and organize things. I have an obsession to categorize everything around me. Organization is essential for understanding. I want to connect the dots. The shelves in my studio are a place to arrange objects looking for connections. Control is important because it’s easy to be out of control with clay. Clean and tight manipulation of clay shows knowledge and control over the material. Clay is formless, just a blob of dirt.

Figure 3: Rainbow for Donald Judd
Chapter 3: Process

Figure 4: *Baby I got the Blues*

The mold making and slip casting process provides me with the ability to produce a large quantity of things, building blocks to create a larger form. Walter Benjamin states, “Technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself.”[^1] The ability to copy allows me to attempt formal

[^1]: Benjamin, Walter *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* p. 13
pursuits of color, arrangement and quantity looking for new situations for the objects to exist in. They are not less precious but their value is shifting. I am provided the ability to study an object by deciphering its form. A quantity removes the preciousness of a singular object and allows me to investigate it based on formal exercises. How does the value of an object change through its quantity? For an object one is more valuable than many but an amount itself can become valuable. I like the challenge in ownership of form. How do I make a form or object my own? To what extreme does it have to be processed to make it transcend the original? As I navigate through process I look for a moment when I take ownership over the form. When does the form become mine?

In the connection between ownership and authenticity Walter Benjamin says, “The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the idea of authenticity.” ² I am interested in how this relates to making a mold of a mold made object. I start with a reproduced object and decide to make a mold of it. The object becomes the original to subsequent production. What if there is no original? I didn’t use a modeled Jesus bust I found a commercial mold. This was a mold that was one of hundreds sent out in the world to produce an icon. The most original part of this object to me is the mold. I’m attracted to the strangeness of this object. The intent was to create thousands and sell them individually. Together the repeated icon is meaningless but when it is singled out and transferred from a public to a private space it receives a new, often higher value. The object is reduced to simplify the mode of production. I took these kitsch, mass produced,

² Benjamin, Walter Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction p. 13
objects and began to poke at them. I started to use these objects as forms to investigate materials and process on. I laughed at these forms and wanted to put them through a process, making a copy of a copy, and push it to a point where it becomes a serious investigation. Humor is a quality I am looking for in a form. I’m looking to laugh and think differently.

Figure 5: 112 Billets
I am an object-maker. While I am making I am looking at everything happening around me, the drips and piles of material that accumulate. I am looking for moments in my process to deny the hand-made quality of my objects. How an object is touched through its process can dictate marks left in the material that leave a residue exposing the process. How can I do this without being so overt? It’s about being present with the material, focusing so hard on that bucket of slip that you’re swimming in a pool of
porcelain. I am looking to be challenged, often technically. I want to push my skills and understanding of tools and the marks that are left behind on material. I’m not looking for perfection compared to industrial standards. I am more in a competition with myself constantly trying to improve the skills I already have and obtain new ones along the way. I am looking for consistency in mark making and in process. Using consistent forms gives me a space where I can visualize an object being pushed to the edge of collapse.

I have gained a confidence in my hand as a maker. I am drawn to the visceral aspects of making. I thought it was perhaps a competition, trying to make an object as consistent and fast as a machine. I became more interested in physically interacting with material and deciding when to touch and when not to. When do the marks of the tool help a piece and when do they hurt? Clay can remember its original state and wants to return to that until it is finished being fired. An understanding of the nature of the material and process enabled me to conceal or expose.

The research I have pursued while in graduate school has been focused on ceramic materials and process. I wanted to better understand the material so I could make more informed decisions during the making process. I started exploring clay bodies ranging from bone china to black creating a muted color spectrum. These were fired in different atmospheres to broaden the somewhat narrow range of brown. *Argillaceous Sequence* is one of several results of these clay tests. The color was a response to the landscape that I had come from, living in rural areas seeing more earth than asphalt. As I progressed through this series of tests I was most excited about the clays that had depth to
their surface, they were melting more. How do ceramic materials chemically interact with one another? How do I physically relate to the material? I’m was more passionate about the test tile than the object so I invested in using base geometric forms as a way to focus on the material. Some clay bodies melted more than others, they began to self-glaze. I could see the material being pushed to its limits on the verge of becoming a puddle.

Figure 7: Water Line
I began testing self-glazing clay bodies and Egyptian paste. I was adjusting the amount of sodium bicarbonate and Ferro Frit-3124. With each round I increased both materials a little more finally overloading it with the melters causing the clay to flux out and deform. I started with a solid ridged block and wanted the materials interacting to push the block to the edge of being a puddle. I was also trying to achieve a depth to the surface of the clay, similar to clear glaze over porcelain. Both layers of material are melting so completely that they fuse and the separation between them is less apparent.
enhancing the depth. Most contemporary Egyptian paste recipes have a dry or rough surface. There is simply not enough silica in the clay melting the material.

At the same time I was also experimenting with ways to apply glaze. I produced a large quantity of ceramic billets; a billet is a comparatively narrow, generally square, bar, especially one rolled from an ingot, on to these ceramic billets I would layer different amounts of silicon carbide, cryolite, Custer feldspar, and some dried celadon glaze. The result was 112 Billets. I took a 40 mesh screen and ran the dry material through over the billets so it would cover but not clump. I was really excited about silicon carbide because of the depth it has as a material through all stages of the ceramic process. It shimmers hues of blues and greens, also reflecting metallic silver and black. The larger the granular size the more it shines. Silicon carbide in combination with cryolite reacts to create a frothy foamy metallic ooze. I chose to dry glaze with these materials, adding water would have just made a sludge. The materials are heavy and without adding any clay they would have settled out immediately. I wanted to keep the materials as elemental as possible so to avoid adding clay for suspension I removed the water. I understood they had the potential to melt and create a phenomenon in the kiln. I wasn’t sure exactly what that would be but the billets provided a platform to figure that out.
Chapter 6: Physicality

The way that I was producing forms was very low-tech at the time, I was mostly press-molding clay into wooden frames to generate objects. It was a very physical process. The physical part of making is an initial attraction to the ceramic process. I like the labor in firing kilns, mixing clay and glaze, and casting molds. There is a directness to working with clay you touch it and you make a mark, it doesn’t take much to make clay into something. Press-molding clay was another way for me to interact with the material,
it was direct and physical. I pushed my forms larger making the physical aspect harder. I felt like the block forms I was making were large but they were just dense solid masses of material not large enough to be architecture but too large to be an object. I was producing mostly block or bar forms. I reduced the form so the phenomenon of the material wouldn’t be interrupted. The block forms were limited, they weren't very accessible. I pushed the blocks deforming and melting them removing them further. They were at a scale that pushed me technically, the scale shift put them in a strange place between architecture and object.

Slip casting had always interested me as a way to generate objects the had a particular quality to their surface. Entering graduate school I didn’t have enough proficiency in the skills and knowledge to use this as a primary construction method. Slip casting was a challenge at first and I was interested in improving technically, with each mold I could see improvements and knew what to change for the next. I took it on as a process to focus on and consider how it can be incorporated into my practice. I started the process of shrinking Jesus as a technical practice in reduction. I know the nature of clay is to shrink when the water leaves the material and the molecules compress during the firing. This is a fact of clay almost 100% of the time it is unavoidable, this is the catalyst of the process. I knew the clay would shrink at a standard rate of 18% each time, repeating this process 20 times. I had a constant, the form became the variable changing with each mold. The process was still physical, I was casting molds rotating them by hand to drain. The seem lines changed minutely softening each time a little more. My
hand learned the movement of the line. At the end of this process the molds became much less time consuming to make following the same lines. Mixing the slip was another part to learn. How little water can I add and still have the slip function a particular way?

I was becoming more interested in building up laters of surface to create the form. Even slip casting is a way of creating a skin, building up material on the surface of the mold. I switched to using a single clay, Grolleg porcelain, fired to F 2400 in either a reduction kiln or a neutral to oxidation atmosphere. There was a challenge to using this material that I was excited about. This porcelain when fired to high temperatures has the potential to slump, bend, warp, and even flux out a little. It also has a great memory. It won’t forgive being mishandled the marks will show up by the time it reaches its maximum temperature. Porcelain is so seductive at every stage of the process the clay is beautiful, finishing semi translucent. Porcelain also allows for a brighter color response from glazes. The more iron in the clay body the darker the glaze would be, by switching to as white of a clay as possible I was able to see a wider range of possibilities in surfaces. Along with the visual quality of grolleg porcelain I was also interested in it as a physical material. It has a density that I was trying to achieve with press-molding but the stoneware clays I was using do not shrink and compress as completely. Physically porcelain feels like a material that has substance to it. It’s durable and permanent it has an archival quality. Porcelain has a density and hardness to it that you can feel when picking it up. A porcelain ray gun seems somehow more valuable than a plastic ray gun even though it’s a copy of the plastic one.
Chapter 7: Complexity

Figure 10: *Blue Circle*

There was a lack of cultural accessibility to the geometric forms I was working with. I have always tinkered and had multiple projects happening at once in my studio. I had my Art and my side projects just for fun. I was goofing around with forms. I wasn’t attached to them because if nothing developed from making a mold of a Ray Gun there was no consequence. I was using found commercial objects that I thought were funny.
The Jesus mold process was getting more complex, going from following the 3 part commercial mold lines to a 9 part mold. I also was producing Ray Guns made from a Razor Ray Gun. It took some testing to find the appropriate glaze thickness and to create a stilt that would minimize the points of contact but allow me to glaze the object in the round. I designed a stilt that would be a one time use stilt, each gun had to have its own stilt produced along with it. The stilts were made from the same clay and would shrink and move with the gun, minimizing the sliding or rolling that had happened when I used commercial stilts. Jesus and the Ray Guns are process driven objects, they are linked by phenomenon from the mold-making and slip casting process. These objects started to replace the blocks on my shelves and I started to work with them continually repositioning the objects. The objects I produce have changed from chunky, crusty, dark dry blocks to smooth, bright, slick objects.

I had to work with Ray Guns so much to look past the object and only see the form. To work past its meanings and just be interested in the object for its shape. Then I could look at it in a truly critical way and problem solve the technical issues that were happening. I was no longer interested in it as a funny object but as an object where a mode of production could be designed around it. I wanted to maximize efficiency, no longer have such a high loss rate due to poor stilting and thick glazing. I wanted to tighten up and define a level of constancy within my process. I’ve always been interested in industrial modes of production. The Ray Guns allow me to be my own mini-factory. A one man production process of casting, cleaning, firing, glazing and firing again.
The history of the material is extremely important to me as a maker. Having dug my own clay, I begin to look for rare or more exotic materials. By understanding a materials history you can understand how the material has been treated and valued over time. Who else has used it? The history of a material becomes something that can help push towards or against your idea.

The scale of my objects has shifted while in school. They were gradually increasing and beginning to lean towards an architectural scale. Part of this growth was my relationship to the material, I wanted to be pushed physically making a large singular object. I wasn’t interested in the multiple. Now I am making forms that are on the scale of objects you can hold in your hands. Slip-casting allows me to produce an abundance of objects that when grouped together still fill space and interact with architecture.

Figure 11: God and Adam
Chapter 8: Perception and Color

Figure 12: *Jesus Under Under Glaze*

How do we use color? How do we perceive it? Glaze calculation and formulation satisfies my analytical mind. I compulsively note material reactions. I’m making color similar to a chemist adding elemental materials together, creating new compounds like Sir William Perkin and the industrialization of color Mauve. Perkins wasn’t looking to make a new color it was a byproduct of another test. This happens in the glaze lab, sometimes you get a result you weren't looking for. You can either throw it out and disregard it, or you can set it aside and analyze it, if for no other reason that learning how not to do that again. I have to approach my practice in a similar way. I can’t disregard what might be an error and irrationally throw it out. Unexpected results are jumping off points for a new rounds of testing.
I have explored the interaction of colors and our perception of color. I poke at the way language describes color. *White Bread* is my way of looking at 22 different recipes to achieve the color white. Alone most of these glazes would be suitable as white but together none are white. My early experiments with clay bodies kept me in the range of earth tones, once I shifted to glaze manipulation a wider color range became more possible.

I’ve always been interested and confused by the names glazes have to describe their color. Every time I tested a red or yellow glaze it went brown. I thought bright colors at high temperatures, F 2400 and above, were difficult and costly. I wanted to redefine high fire color for myself. This was a technical pursuit but I also thought of it as a way to open up more possibilities for future projects. I refined glaze recipes that I was given or found in books, testing different applications. Refining the materials and the application process helps me better understand how they’re melting. Physically understanding how the materials feel when dry, the density of the powder and the roughness of the grain. The more I know how these feel the better I can apply a glaze and focus on handling in and out of the kiln. The transformation of materials sucks me in, taking a number of base materials mixing them and through the ceramic process creating a new homogenous material. At the temperature I am exploring the clay begins to melt and fuse with the glaze they are not separate layers anymore. Discovery comes through refinement. The more I refine a process the more I understand each part and the subtle changes I can adjust to make the process just right for an object.
On the wall 6 racks hang in a grid 2 vertical rows of 3 or 3 horizontal rows of 2. Each rack contains a field of color expanding the ROYGBIV spectrum to 21 colors. The racks are specifically designed to hold the objects. The forms are tightly packed in with not enough space for a piece of paper to slide between them. The racks have angles and lines that relate back to the objects they contain heightening the feeling that these racks are specific to these forms and this amount. The 6 racks are vertically symmetrical,
starting the spectrum in the center and working out towards the edge. With the brightest colors being in the middle, there is an intensity that lessens as you move towards the periphery. The symmetry is reinforced by inward facing gold dots on the objects.

Each rack contains 21 objects, all are the same form but have different surfaces. Approaching the wall the form becomes more and less clear. You are able to make out certain characteristics the smooth rounded cone that angles up and out repeating the silhouette of the rack. The objects rest just above the top edge of the rack but are not in danger of sliding off, the sides hold them upright and there is a front lip that helps containment. The forms are smooth and hard. The forms are angled down into the wall in a resting position, their identity is concealed through positioning and proximity. Is it a rocket?

*Razor Sample V. 2.0* is about the color spectrum and redefining my own limitations of material. The forms are a vehicle for me to explore my relationship with color. I wanted to find colors that could speak directly to ceramics at the same time transcend the condition of studio ceramics, walking the line of industry and hand-made.

The Ray Gun form was the residue from a process of making a mold off of a mold. First I slip cast a Razor Ray Gun, after 5 minutes I drained the mold. Once the mold had drained and finished dripping, roughly 3 minutes, I poured plaster into the cavity filling the hollow clay form. I allowed the plaster to charge for about 20 minutes. When the mold would release from the clay I removed one half and used the clay object still embedded in half of the mold to make a new mold from the old one. When I was
done I removed the slip cast form with a plaster interior. I peeled back the clay and discovered a smooth, soft plaster form. It was much more generalized than the original but still retained its Ray Gun aura. This is the first Ray Gun I have produced that I feel like is truly mine. It was a moment when I could have disregarded the plaster, tossing it in the garbage but I had the curiosity to look inside the clay and find a new form.

*Razor Sample V. 2.0* produced residue along the way that is exposed after the firing. Gold dots cover up black marks from the stilts that elevated the fully glazed object from the kiln shelf. These black dots are a minimal amount of residue but on such a simple surface are highly noticeable. I wanted to expose this mark further by applying gold to the areas, creating 3 gold dots on each Ray Gun, highlighting the stilting process. This process I developed enabled me to generate these forms so consistently that I was able to play with them like building blocks. They didn’t lose their value but there was a shift from one being important because of its rarity to one being important because of its relationship to the group. The object shifts from the singular to the multiple and back.

Figure 14: *Razor Sample V. 2.0 (detail)*
The chaos of these clusters keeps me visually stimulated. Their disorder is only heightened by the order of the pieces on each side. My eyes bounce from group to group. They have the appearance of blobs of paint on a painters pallet, tests. I’m looking for the right shade of white but I can’t find it.

*White Bread* is about ownership of form, control of material, overabundance of material, my experience in and out of academic settings and the cost of making art that is so facility dependent. This is my response to being back in a situation where material research is encouraged. These objects are me working out my identity as a maker, navigating form while embracing humor and craft.
I cast each mold 50 times generating an overabundance of forms to arrange. I placed them on carts in neat little rows. I piled them in kilns recklessly stacking mixing them all up, reorganizing the busts each time I moved them. Each time I had to pay greater attention to how many there were, where, and what glazes had been used. In *White Bread* there are small clusters of each surface, 22 groupings, totaling 616 individual ceramic objects. Within each cluster there are 28 objects, a pair from each mold, #'s 5-19.

The clusters are chaos for me. The clusters arose from all the organization I was so focused on. The packing I obsessed over organizing them by glaze type. During the unpacking spreading out was a way of organizing before creating rows. Their current format was unplanned but only happened because of the planning before. This arrangement has been a moment to rest and look at these objects from a new perspective. *White Bread* consists of forms that were generalized by making a copy of a copy from a commercial mold of Jesus. I repeated this process 19 times creating a series of 20 molds, each one more reduced than the last. The form was going through a process of addition and subtraction simultaneously. The glaze added a layer millimeters thick flattening out the form, while the mass of the form was reduced during the firing process. I took advantage of the nature of ceramic materials and shrunk this object down 93% from its original size.

I chose to use molds #'s 5-19 to produce this piece. Mold #5 is when I take ownership over the form. The object shifts from being a specific individual to a specific
The process of mold making became much more complex while the form was being simplified. With each copy another layer of glaze was applied slowly building up material. Clay shrinks and compresses during the firing, the bust began to slump in on itself, the chin moving towards the chest. The clean edges and angles that allowed it to be a 3 part mold were now being softened, rounded, making it more complex. It still retained its aura as a bust but was no longer specific to an identity but specific to a process. This is a sampling of molds from a process as well as the color white.

Exploiting the slip casting process drives the forms in my thesis exhibition. The surfaces were chosen as a way to represent the research I pursued while in graduate school. I explored my relationship with color and perception of color. All the surfaces are advertised as white but after being processed and placed in proximity they are white and not white at the same time.
Up and down, up and down. My eye moves vertically along the line wanting to complete it and wrap it around the room. The forms go from edge to edge blurring where they start and stop. The forms moving up the wall are consistent and steady, they set a
standard. Then an abrupt change in direction when the line hits the floor it rotates 90 degrees and the objects move out. They gradually reduce trailing off.

What are these? They protrude from the wall. These objects have been reoriented to conceal their original identity. The form takes on a graphic quality. The glaze pools heightening the contrast between elevations in surface. The form is unknown. Its profile becomes essential but in such close quarters it develops a new outline and becomes a new form. The form is accentuated by the glaze, then flattened out by being put up against the wall denying its 3-dimensionality.

Repetition of a singular form moving vertically on the wall. This is a bust of Jesus repositioned. The bottom has been shifted 90 degrees and he is facing down. The busts are tightly packed and the face is not initially recognizable. Even when approaching Jesus from the direction he is facing his identity isn’t initially understood. The quantity and positioning have concealed the identity and obscured the bust as a blueprint for form. When the form meets the floor it shifts going back to its original orientation shrinking 15% each time it is fired getting slightly smaller with each one. This continues on for 21 figures ending in a small round marble sized ceramic object. As glaze covers each one its features are flattened out and it moves from specific, Jesus, to a more generalized bust form and down to a specific object that was generated through this process.
Chapter 12: Summation

Figure 18: So Close You’re Almost Kissing

While investigating phenomenology in my studio I have been able to focus on refining the way I generate form and developed an awareness to the tools I use. The remarkable memory of clay provides me with a conscious material to work with. It’s not only the way that tools interact with clay but also my physical interaction that has been a
source of investigation. I took the time to learn and refine new modes of production while
developing a dialogue with new tools and technology that are becoming more accessible
to studio artists.

It is not only the marks I make but the ones I leave behind that are important. I am
interested in the residue that comes from making. These are moments in the studio that
were once ignored but now are an integral part of working. I’ve slowed down taking the
time to fully appreciate the unexpected, attempting to respond in the most appropriate
way possible.

I’m more aware of my relationship to scale and have become comfortable with
being an object maker. I was pushing against this, leaning towards a scale where I
competed with architecture but the allure of the object pulled me and I have embraced it
and its relationship to ceramic history. Objects move away from the singular and the
group sets a standard, they become blocks of color and form that I can continually
arrange and rearrange.

I’m not asking permission to use a form; I’m taking forms that I’m curious about.
I wonder how much I have to process an object to gain ownership over it? It could be a
shift in materials or surface. Part of me wants to poke the sleeping bear then hide behind
a tree. This object is strange; it's a commercial mold of a sacred icon. I have inserted
myself into the cannon of this form by producing it. I have pushed my irreverence for
these objects so far that I now have reverence for them. Its value comes through its
process and the time spent with it, not its iconography. I have made these forms mine by
putting them through an alchemic process, distancing them from the original but not completely removing them. These mass produced objects are strange, they aren’t the original they’re one of millions out in the world. This brings up questions of authenticity, which one is the original? Does that matter? When does it gain value? Can it become the original? How do we make objects our own? I question the objects I produce and the situations I put them in.

Over the course of my time at The Ohio State University I have found new outlets for material phenomenology at different steps in the making process, glazing and firing are important components in controlling the variables, as I try to understand the results. These objects were chosen individually for their form but create a new dialogue when placed in the same space. I have explored subverting an object’s history by inserting myself into it, producing forms that contain a cultural identity.
References


