



SALON 94
FREEMAN'S



Mary Frey, Pat McCarthy, JJ PEET & Tom Sachs
September 7 – October 25, 2014

Brain to Hand to Object [Clay].

—JJ PEET, *The Communist Contemporary Ceramics Manifesto*

Ir/reverence

Mary Frey, Pat McCarthy, JJ PEET and Tom Sachs meet weekly to make, fire, and glaze. They met in a class at the 92nd Street Y taught by PEET, the group's "leader" (or "master," as with traditional Japanese workshops). The four New York-based artists, friends and collaborators included in *Satan Ceramics*, shape clay with a sense of irreverence, rites and ritual. Like "THE LADIES SEWING CIRCLE AND TERRORIST SOCIETY" – or, craft circles that second as clandestine political meetings – the work of the group taken as an idiosyncratic whole ties extremist functionality with subversive tendencies. Process, politics, labor, the hand-made, tradition, humor, gossip, danger, historical nods and punk sensibilities are ultimately tied to the underlying collaborative strategies of integrity of the material and sincerity of the object. As Frey puts it, "Our weekly ritual takes place within the clubhouse where we eat together, share knowledge, discuss, make pots, talk shit and dream."

Clay + stuff

The artists use ceramics with other materials that are often non-traditional media. A porcelain urinal by Tom Sachs – functional though presented like an artifact – also incorporates epoxy, rope and Kevlar (the material of bullet-proof vests). JJ PEET's shiv cup includes a subtle industrial ceramic blade chipped off a store-bought kitchen knife. PEET embeds the cup with secondary functionality as a weapon; the cup can encapsulate water or blood, the possibility to nourish or harm. Frey's porcelain skateboard is equipped with actual trucks and wheels though un-ridable. The handmade version takes on another media fully, translating and elevating the modest wood board. With another twist, the porcelain nesting bowls of Pat McCarthy are intended to be filled by his pigeons with twigs and leaves and dirt, to build the ideal bed for laying eggs. McCarthy's bowls are functional, meant to nurture new life and have a use value in the physical world outside of the artist.

Language & Symbols

All four artists use symbols and text. Frey and Sachs respectively incorporate the pentagram into their pieces. Sachs brands many of his traditionally made chawan tea bowls with well-known logos including that of NASA and Chanel; Frey has glazed her works with references to Barbara Kruger via the Supreme logo. Sachs and McCarthy each tell the story of the sculptural environments they build through issue after issue of obsessive, personalized zines. PEET has produced small booklets with his manifesto of making ceramics. For PEET, words are malleable and a single word contains manifold meanings. His *BRICKVACES* have odd small skull faces etched into their surfaces, and can be used as bud vases or as bricks that can be thrown "to start a revolution, or build a house."



Mary Frey

Frey makes mementos of suburban America that consider family values, contemporary sexual mores and idiosyncratic personal freedoms. A porcelain key party tray finished in matte-black engobe features a nude rendering of The Simpsons' Krusty the Clown and sex goddess Edna Krabappel. A classic tourist souvenir tray that might typically feature a state bird or flower is replaced by swingers, reflecting the steamy nightlife that might be imagined in small towns. Two porcelain skateboards, re-made in the classic style of the artist's 1975 Hobie skateboard, feature a "nude wearing glasses" drawing by her son Arsun, then aged seven. Revealing the personal narrative within family histories -- a Mycenaean mixing bowl tells the story of Sapphic encounter; a teapot modeled on a classic 70's Mr. Coffee percolator is adorned with the familiar cover illustration from *The Hobbit* -- Frey celebrates the elevated place of ceramics in the telling and re-telling of stories and mythologies of the ages.

Pat McCarthy

McCarthy's object-making is bound to the eccentric framework of his pigeoning practice. *Babylon Coops* is the home of the artist's few hundred pigeons and *Gesamkunstwerk* – or, total synthesis of arts and life as a revolutionary and all-embracing kind of art practice. McCarthy builds, maintains and develops his pigeon environment on the roof of his studio as daily performance, ritual and rehearsal. The Coops are well-furnished with electricity and simple Bauhaus-like architecture of plywood and porcelain, scrap steel and fur. A central ceramic feeding vessel has a self-portrait glaze-fired atop its lid, for the birds who perch above to study the architect - their leader, chef, and janitor. Porcelain nesting bowls support protected egg-laying, and ceramic triangular perches installed in a grid, line the birds up with neat minimalism. The birds born into the family are stamped under the wing (rather than the traditional mark of ownership by ankle bracelets which the artist refers to as "shackles") with Babylon's symbol, and are not trained for synchronized flying (standard, local pigeoning practice) but set free to fly in any course they desire as unfettered individuals. His zines (collectively titled *Born to Kill Fanzine*) tell the story of the rooftop practice: "The city in the sky. Civil disobedience. It's fun to watch."

JJ PEET

PEET's clay objects have latent binaries like water/blood, life/death, build/destroy. PEET's objects contain inherent volatility and potentially harmful politics, which connects them to our contemporary world of financial markets, global politics and the changing environment. His porcelain camera "viewers" consider the rapid obsolescence of new technologies. Hanging sculptures present a framework for two objects, a piece of clay imprinted with the artist's hand and a partial iPhone sliced open like an elevation or diagram; there is a comparison of life-spans between complicated present-day engineering versus the simply hand-crafted object as the thing that will survive and retain function through time. PEET's manifesto of ceramics – "Brain to Hand to Object" – considers how closely tied the body is to the material, and vice versa, the various ways that the object affects the body like an appendage, a system or a life cycle.

Tom Sachs

Sachs' practice is rooted in absurdist functionality, engineering, product design and labor. He often builds whole environments where objects are to be experienced in tandem as parts of a whole system, and where all materials, process and labor are left exposed. Paralleling the space program engineers with ancient tea ceremony rituals, Sachs has made hundreds of eclectic porcelain chawan bowls of varying sizes, shapes, functions and branding that reference engineering, consumption and fashion. The tea bowls are often used in the studio, and all leftover parts and pieces are used to make new objects, like a tall "abstract art sculpture" made from epoxied leftovers of his ceramics practice. A separate precarious porcelain walking cane sculpture is more exacting and realistic, though slim and vulnerable, as if to describe the leg it is meant to support. An odd funnel of a sculpture is a precisely crafted portable unisex urinal. A clay boom-box is also crafted for ultimate usability, and like a relic or object from the technology graveyard, reverberates with a playlist constructed by the four artists. The sound from the clay fills the gallery, reproducing the workspace the artists share in their process of making.

Salon 94 Freemans is located at 1 Freeman Alley off Rivington, between Bowery and Chrystie Street. It is open Wednesday-Saturday, 11-6. For more information, please call (212) 529 7400 or email info@salon94.com