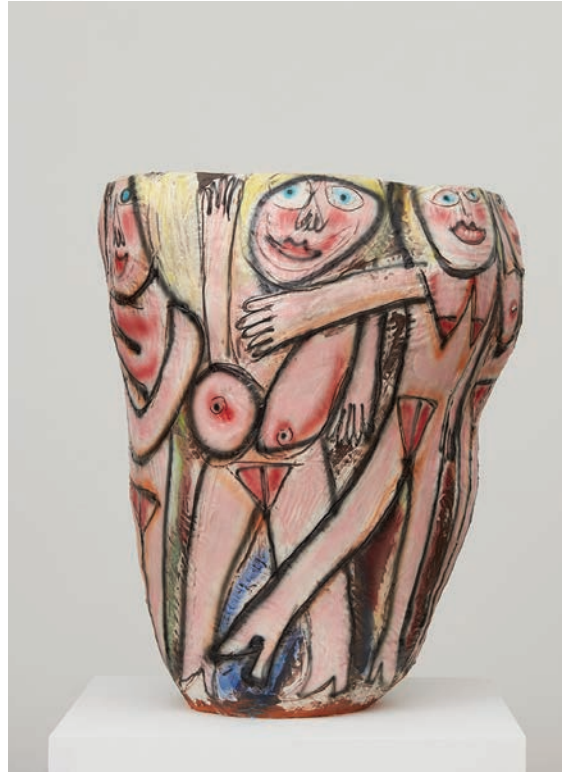


Ruby Neri first found success under a different name and in a different medium: her graffiti images of horses, made under the alias of 'Reminisce', could be found all over her hometown of San Francisco in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since her subsequent switch to sculpture – and to a gallery setting – human figures not equine ones have become her subject. Neri says, however, that she still wants her work 'to have a street edge, like some kid broke in with a spray can'. She's referring specifically here to the buccaneer way she applies paint to her pieces, all splotches and splats in discordant colours, that suggest defacement more than decoration. The figures themselves are often combinations of plaster and clay, which Neri has grafted together using resin. They seem to have emerged from the centre of the earth rather than the kiln, as if risen up as bodies fully formed. Perhaps Neri has been reading Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) and his call for artists to take their inspiration from terra firma.

Some of the figures stand, some sit; some bend, some stretch; others walk, while those in groups occasionally engage in would-be conversation. They recall African Fang masks (Picasso's inspiration for *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907), as well as the spindly figures of Giacometti (1901–1966) or Oceanic totems. The pieces have a faux-naïf aesthetic to them, often with holes for eyes and thick black outlines; look closely and you might even see Neri's fingerprints on their necks and backs.

In her most recent work, Neri has taken to working solely in clay for the first time. The result is a group of vital, highly sexualized representations of the naked, female form: both as depictions that are airbrush glazed on the side of huge cylindrical vessels and as freestanding sculptures in their own right. Their poses, often contorted, leave little to the imagination; their erogenous zones are disproportionately large; their facial expressions mix ecstasy and hysteria, suggesting untold private pleasures (or perhaps pains).

You could never mistake these ladies for nudes of Classical tradition; instead, they call to mind the earth goddesses of Ice Age sculpture. Yet with their high-heeled shoes, it's also apparent that we're dealing with depictions of modern women. As she did with her horse graffiti – recalling the ancient cave paintings of Lascaux, on the streets of modern California – Neri shows her gift for conjuring a sense of old and new in one and the same art work. • Alastair Smart



Ruby Neri Born 1970, San Francisco. Lives and works in Los Angeles. **Selected Solo Shows:** 2016 – 'Slaves and Humans', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 'Villa of Mysteries', Los Angeles Museum of Art; 2015 – 'The Big Feel', Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco; 2012 – 'Sculpture', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2009 – 'This is me, is that you?', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 2006 – John Natsoulas Gallery, Davis, California; 2005 – China Art Objects, Los Angeles; 2003 – Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions. **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2015 – 'NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection', Rubell Family Collection, Miami; 2014 – 'Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California', Oakland Museum of California, in collaboration with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; 'Caught Looking', Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, California; 'The Possible', Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California; 2013 – 'Energy That is All Around: Mission School', Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute and touring to Grey Art Gallery, New York University; 'Busted', High Line Art, New York; 2012 – 'Made in L.A. 2012', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; 'At Home/Not at Home: Works from the Collection of Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg', CCS Hessel Museum, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

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- *Untitled*, 2016
Ceramic with glaze
81.3 × 67.3 × 67.3 cm
(32 × 26 1/2 × 26 1/2 in)
- *Untitled*, 2016
Ceramic with glaze
82.6 × 61.6 × 55.9 cm
(32 1/2 × 24 1/2 × 22 in)
- *Untitled (Small Double Lady)*, 2016
Ceramic with glaze
97.8 × 83.8 × 55.9 cm
(38 1/2 × 33 × 22 in)
- *Untitled (Double Girl with Braid)*, 2016
Ceramic with glaze
52.7 × 72.4 × 24.1 cm
(20 3/4 × 28 1/2 × 9 1/2 in)
- Overleaf:
Installation view, "Slaves
and Humans" exhibition,
David Kordansky Gallery,
Los Angeles, 2016



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