



KILN

Curated by
Tiffany Zabłudowicz

Opening: November 12, 6 - 8 pm
November 12 – December 20, 2014

Leila Heller Gallery, The Wood Room, 4th floor
43 West 57th Street – New York, NY 10019

New York, New York—Leila Heller Gallery, Midtown, is pleased to present KILN, a group exhibition of contemporary ceramics curated by Tiffany Zabłudowicz, on view from November 12 – December 20, 2014. KILN will feature works on our 4th floor exhibition space by Aaron Angell, Rachel Kneebone, William J. O’Brien, Arlene Shechet, Josh Smith, and Jesse Wine; artists who all work with ceramics as their primary medium. KILN marks Leila Heller Gallery at 57th street’s launch of the Wood Room featuring curated individual and group exhibitions by emerging and established artists. The exhibition program is dedicated to showing critically relevant art in an unconfined manner and within the immediate context of contemporary art history.

The exhibition focuses on the kiln - the hidden creator of ceramics. The kiln can destroy as much as it can create and until a work comes out of it, its final form is not entirely predictable. The group of artists in this show work within the limits of this medium and have developed methods of partially controlling the process. The kiln has existed for thousands of years in various forms, but contemporary artists are pushing its use in innovative directions, creating works that are as tantalizing as they are varied.

Josh Smith’s playfully childlike work lays out the first part of the process, the construction and evolution of the sculpture. The marks of his hand are visible in the final formations. The most delicate stage of ceramics is the bisque fire, the initial firing that dehydrates the ceramics and hardens it. During this stage, the mass shrinks causing splits. Rachel Kneebone’s glossy, smooth, and pure white sculptures purposefully include the cracks and imperfections that form during the firing process, highlighting that the creation is a part of the work. She adopts traditional porcelain figurines associated with kitsch ornaments and twists them into complex bacchanalian forms. The

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color of the glaze changes when fired. Aaron Angell develops his own glazes and invites other artists to use the glazes that he has made during ceramics residencies at *Troy Town Pottery*. His glazes vary from crystal-like to cracked washes. Arlene Shechet has gone so far as to incorporate parts of the kiln into her work, making visible an unseen yet very significant part of the process. *Gone A* rests on a kiln shelf and *Truth in Fiction* stands on the firebricks that insulated it inside of the machine.

The artists in *KILN* re-appropriate ceramic's rich, diverse, and global history and subvert traditional ceramic tropes. Arlene Shechet created *Bricks on Blocks* during a residency at the historic Meissen Factory in Germany. The bricks in these works are casts of firebricks. The blocks are unseen parts of the Meissen production process. One brick has been painted by a Meissen painter with Shechet's interpretation of the traditional "onion pattern". Created at her studio, the protruding black and yellow edge of *Gone A* is a hand-built reference to the straps, which hold the molds. The head of William J. O'Brien's *Untitled, 2013*, meshes together a variety of influences, ranging from Halloween masks to 19th Century "face jugs". His works maintain an intentional rawness, hewn with visceral scratches, indentations, dripping glaze, and exposed clay. Jesse Wine pairs his larger sculptures with smaller accessory pieces, so the head of *Rasta Sha* is placed near to a colorful plate of ceramic food. In Wine's *Rasta Sha*, belts humorously replace hair and fall across the sculpture's head. The title of *I really care I* ironically contradicts Wine's seemingly messy application of glaze. The cracked surface disgusts as much as it seduces, with a plethora of colors and textures. The shape of Jesse Wine's round kiln is evident from the roundness of these pieces. The works in this show are art objects, shifting away from the strong associations between ceramics and design.

Today sculpture-making technology has become so advanced that items can be completely designed digitally, for example with 3D printing and laser engraving machines. The artist's studio is too often a laptop at a desk. By contrast, with ceramics, the process of producing is gradual and there can be no precise outcome. Ceramics is therefore a retreat from a world so dominated by technology. The artist's hand must work in collaboration with the kiln to create.

About the Curator:

Tiffany Zabłudowicz (b.1992, London) is a writer and a curator. She recently graduated from Brown University where she studied art history and literary arts. *KILN* is the first show she has curated in New York. She first became interested in ceramics from regular visits to the Camden Arts Center in London, where Rachel Kneebone and Jesse Wine have both been artists-in-residence.

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