

# CERAMICS NOW



## Classical Columns, Stacks, and Piles

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in Articles, Exhibitions

**By Odette Lopez**

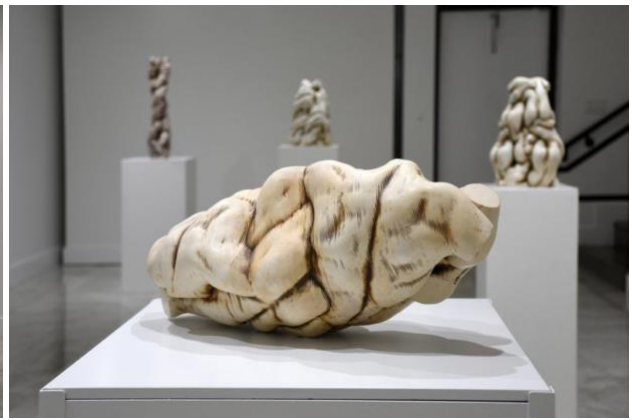
Contemporary art is a product of art history, a transformation and utilization of the vast repository of images and ideas that came before it. It is a myth that the ancient world and contemporary art have relatively nothing to do with each other. On the contrary, ancient artworks are the foundation of our modern visual and cultural language;

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something that contemporary art continues to build off of. This relationship is inherent in Carlos Enrique Prado's Recycling Piles series in his newest exhibition [Tautologies at the Kendall Art Cultural Center](#), a collection of ceramic sculptures that are composed of repeating human figures, assembled into what he calls columns, stacks, and piles.

The word 'Tautologies' actually refers to "saying the same thing twice," something that "repeats what we already know." These sculptures—themselves assemblages of manipulated copies of famous sculptures and classical forms from antiquity, transform an ancient visual tendency into new contemporary motifs. Among the quoted artworks are the Discobolus and the Venus de Milo, they are familiar and universally recognized works of art, which Prado has replicated and reassembled to create something new. The ancient Romans often replicated stock bodies in order to create, and solidify, a dialogue that conveyed meaning and significance through art. The unique assembly of Prado's sculptures does the same thing; these repetitive arrangements create a unique contemporary visual language by using famous sculptures to create new ones, all the while maintaining the integrity and the recognizability of the work he is quoting.





This reinvention of a classical iconographic paradigm both utilizes and simultaneously deconstructs the classical human figure. In that, the recognizable interlocking limbs meld together to create something that doesn't look human—or sculptural at all, in the traditional sense. They are contemporary sculptures with an ancient, classical foundation; created with what the artist calls: “recycled elements of art history.” They have thus revitalized the presence of the human figure in art, as well as the way in which these famous artworks are quoted in art: repeated again and again until the famous sculptures become white noise, and one starts to admire the assemblage, the whole, rather than the parts.

At the same time, one can't help but go back to the human building blocks of the pieces. The choice of male versus female bodies informs the reception of the final product: those utilizing the male torso—Gladiator, Discobolus—tend to be hard and rigid. Those that utilize the female form such as Eurydice and Venus tend to be softer in appearance. Regardless, they all emphasize and take advantage of the structure of the human body in order to construct new structures. They constantly shift attention to, and away, from the repeatedly sculpted torsos and legs that are wrapping around each other, seemingly in motion.

Similar to a semantic satiation—the act of repeating something until it loses all meaning—the work in *Tautologies* repeats these famous sculptures and forms to the point where they no longer mean anything on their own. It is their transformation, their unique manipulation (the columns, stacks, and piles) that now take center stage and take on new meanings as new works of art. In his statement, the artist writes “the word ‘Tautologies’ can also refer to statements that are in themselves redundant...it is a circular argument that...brings you right back to where you started.” [Tautologies](#) is a body of contemporary work that directly draws from the past. Modern and contemporary art due to their titles are believed to produce entirely new works of art and in many cases they do. But, in reality a large majority of the work represents a “long drive that has brought it [contemporary art] back to where it ultimately draws from: the past.  
Discobolus (Cluster I)

Moreover, Prado is not just visually translating an ancient topic into contemporary paradigms and aesthetics, but utilizing an interesting process that includes digital construction and ceramic printing. Carlos has made ceramic sculptures in the shape of

“stacks” before, but now the use of digital modeling technology has allowed him to create a larger body of work with more complex compositions and powerful designs. Clay 3D printing is a relatively new technique and still presents some limitations. However, Prado’s clever use of this media is remarkable. In doing so, he has pushed the limits of ceramic printing beyond the current standards and has increased his level of expertise in handling the clay 3D printer. This process, along with his manual intervention, manages to make each work unique and allows him to formulate new ideas through a long and complex history of artistic production and culture. Thus, the exhibition *Tautologies* shows the evolution and continued fruitful relationship of art historical spheres that are more than 2,000 years apart.

*Odette Lopez, Director and Curator at Kendall Art Center, 2022*

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**Carlos Enrique Prado** is a visual artist and professor of art. He is originally from Havana, Cuba, where he received education and developed a career as an artist and art educator. Since 2003, Carlos was a professor of sculpture and ceramics at ISA, University of Art of Cuba until he moved to the United States in 2011. He currently lives and works in South Florida, and teaches ceramics at the University of Miami, where he holds the position of Senior Lecturer. Carlos’s artworks are predominantly sculptures and ceramics, but he has also delved into drawing and digital art. His works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at major art institutions, museums, and galleries in Cuba and the USA, as well as in other countries in the Americas and Europe. They are also part of important private and public collections. He has also presented his work as a visiting artist and guest speaker at various universities and art schools, including NCECA, the University of Southern California, Midwestern State University, Arizona State University, University of Mary Washington, and the University of Alabama.

#### **Kendall Art Center**

The Kendall Art Cultural Center is an institution that actively participates in South Florida’s art community. Home of The Rodriguez Collection, we are committed to promoting and preserving contemporary art through our annual programs, and exhibitions. Now in transition to becoming the Museum of Contemporary Art of the

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Americas (MoCAA), we can better support emerging artists, students, and the community by providing a platform for visibility, collaboration and education.

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Photo captions

- Exhibition views (photos 1-9), Carlos Enrique Prado: Tautologies at Kendall Art Center, May-June 2022
- Mars (Double Stack), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 17 ½ x 6 x 4 ½ inches
- Discobolus (Column II), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 21 ½ x 6 x 6 inches
- Gladiator (Double Column III), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 29 x 7 ½ x 5 ½ inches
- Venus (Column I), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 28 x 6 x 5 ½ inches
- Sluggard (Column I), Recycling Piles series, 2022, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 28 ½ x 7 x 7 inches
- Gladiator (Arch I), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 11 x 16 x 6 inches
- Discobolus (Cluster I), Recycling Piles series, 2021, Stoneware / Cone 6 Oxidation, Ceramic 3D print, 15 x 12 x 7 inches

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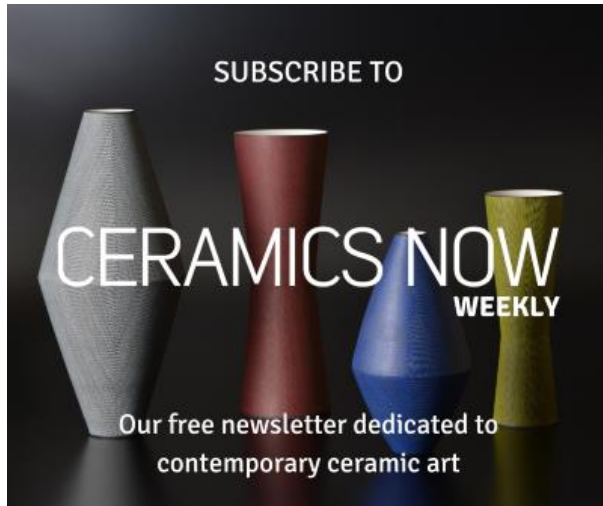
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