

ROBERTA GRIFFITH



Unpleasant Conversations

HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART - 2017
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Artist Statement

I have incorporated image transfers into my ceramic work since the 1970s. Research for my current project started three years ago when I began painting abstract compositions with underglaze colors, including text, on thin porcelain sheets, then kiln-firing them for permanence. Titled, *The NO Series*, the text consisted of one word, which began with *NO* and expanded to include the words *NEVER*, *NOT*, *NOPE*, *NOTHING* and *NO-NO*. These negatives are a visual response to natural and man-made disasters, political and social conflicts and incivilities that plague our contemporary world.

Unpleasant Conversations consists of white porcelain plates and cups installed in the gallery. Decals made from four black ink *NO Series* drawings are attached to the plates and cups through kiln-firing. While the cups are installed in disarray on a black table in the center of the gallery, the plates are installed on a yellow band encircling the area. The yellow band, which recalls a yellow caution tape, is bisected by a continuing red line with an arrow that delineates space in various ways. First, as a reference to the horizon line, and therefore, distant space; second, as part of an encircling band, which wraps around and encloses the space encouraging conversation; and third, as an arrow which directs the eye around the area. Normally red signals stop, or the ceasing of movement, yet here it acts to encourage the viewers' movement around the gallery.

The idea of conversation is further examined through variations of the text. The printed words act as declarations, but also as responses, echoes or even yells, among the plates and the cups or among people. The simple black panels with white text on the circular plates and cups, coupled with the communal reference to the sharing of food and drink pull people in. At the same time, the words on these everyday objects push people away, reflecting the overwhelming negativity, divisiveness and hostility often found in society today.

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The John Dominis and Patches Damon Holt Gallery
Honolulu Museum of Art
Honolulu, Hawai'i

July 28 to November 12, 2017

Opens to the public during ARTafterDARK, July 28, 6-9 pm

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