

THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

SANTA FE CLAY

545 CAMINO DE LA FAMILIA, SANTA FE

COMBINING. STACKING. WEAVING. STRINGING. LAYERING.

Every work in Santa Fe Clay's *The Sum of Its Parts* exhibition is an arrangement of components. Some rely on light and shadow to gain full effect. Some create unexpected textures. Others depend on geometry. And every piece invites involvement from the viewer to discover hidden and surprising angles and configurations within each sculpture.

Nathan Craven's *Luminance* required a special wall with a slanted oval cutout that could be backlit. Within that oval, Craven built his site-specific piece. He layered around three hundred and fifty five-and-a-half-inch-long extruded tiles—his version of bricks—in subtle shades of cream and beige to create a porous texture within the oval. Craven makes the tiles from dies that he only keeps until he hears from a viewer that a motif actually resembles an animal or a specific object. I hesitate to say that my favorite tiles look like a moose and a dog for fear those dies will be destroyed. Some of

the tiles have single chambers; others have several, allowing the light streaming in from behind to play wonderful tricks. Move far enough to the side of the oval and nearly all the direct, incoming light disappears and some of the tiles' interior textures become visible. Stand directly in front and the effect is somewhere between a lacy starburst and the blurry lines of warp speed. Staring for too long creates a distinct, borderline queasy sense of motion.

On a nearby tabletop, the lacy patterns continue in Eliza Au's *Axis*. She has assembled eight ceramic modules to create a sculpture of interlocking sections, all from the same mold. Au explores symmetry and repetition, with each two-dimensional unit contributing to the final three-dimensional form. Every curve is a gorgeous teal with a mid-arch protrusion matching those Craven creams. The careful viewer will find tiny veins of red hidden throughout the piece. On the opposite wall, the curves continue in Julie York's *Peep*

Series (Blue). York takes a trio of four-inch-diameter plastic tubes and fills them with slip-cast elements. Each tube is capped with a glass dome that acts as a lens and animates the inner porcelain components so that they become underwater stones or a kaleidoscope or long-necked gourds or a giant version of my favorite aunt's Italian glass paperweight. And they extend for miles into the wall—not the mere five-inch depth of the tube—and yet they cannot. It's a luscious illusion. York, a self-described anthropologist and archaeologist with a fascination for repetition and redundancy, scours salvage yards for industrial remnants to incorporate into her work in order to articulate how true nature collides with "man's impression on nature."

Smooth curves characterize the work of both Elizabeth Hunt and Maren Kloppmann. Hunt's wall tapestry of "woven" clay is an ingenious use of nearly six hundred and fifty one-and-three-quarter-inch by three-quarter-inch U-shaped elements, like massive inchworms. Hunt presses a tack into the back of each U and when they are pushed into the wall, the finished piece—custom built for this wall—looks as woven as ceramic yarn. Kloppmann's wall-mounted, five-pillow sculpture, called *Shadow Wall Pillows Horizon IV*, is captivating on many levels. How can porcelain appear this soft? The five pillows, each with its own rudder, are aligned based on where their lower half is glazed black. This alignment, when combined with their spacing and with a prescribed distance from the light source, creates intricate shadow patterns and shapes on the wall and on the pillows themselves. Move from side to

side along the piece and the patterns shift. Like York, Kloppmann juxtaposes the human-made with the natural.

Jae Won Lee's wall installation, *Frail Hope, Internal Distance: Object X*, combines hundreds of small porcelain elements that evoke feathers or leaves. They are strung on eighty or more transparent threads, and Lee adds a tiny, clear glass bead on each string, above and below the cluster. This work relies on light and viewing distance to reveal the grays, yellows, creams, and whites that vanish up close. Lee investigates pattern and the way that repetition influences balance.

Completing the show are the delicate, slip-cast, functional tableware pieces, *Place Settings from Rituals of the Maker*, in sage, cream, and black by Heather Mae Erickson. Functional, yes, but also sculpturally stunning when the dishes are nested. And Del Harrow's tabletop abstract ceramic sculpture *Coiled Typology* creates a variety of still lifes from multiple views around and across his handmade table. Each of the eleven objects has a section that is glazed—half a leaf, an interior triangle, a flower petal, a sphere. Harrow's objects reflect the rhythms, transitions, and gradients of physical forms, alone or in combination. Gallery Director Avra Leodas designed the show's layout and she guides us beautifully through a world of light, shadow, and cream.

—SUSAN WIDER

Left: Jae Won Lee, *Frail Hope, Internal Distance: Object X*, porcelain, monofilament, and bead, 40" x 14" x 7", 2013

Below: Eliza Au, *Axis*, ceramic, wax, and metal pins, 22" x 22" x 22", 2011

