

ROGER HERMAN

JANUARY 9 – FEBRUARY 6, 2016

Opening Reception is Saturday, January 9th 5-7pm

Two fourteen foot shelving structures, nearly flush to the ceiling along two walls, display, un-encased, a fully stocked arsenal of ceramic vessels and pots. At the center is a long low-lying table of new ceramic discs presented like inverted earthen boils or blisters. Twenty years of ceramic work by the Los Angeles artists' artist Roger Herman encompasses the space of Richard Telles. Roger Herman is an inventor of the present. His ceramic output reveals an exuberant embrace of the chance event while yielding the confident and discerning gesture of the hand.

Not quite installation, not quite retrospective, and antecedents aside – Herman, a regarded UCLA professor – the entirety of this work hovers. The individual pieces, in no chronological order, engage techniques of wax resistance akin to the artist's woodblock prints or blue underglazing exposed as a final gouache-like painted surface. In some he bypasses trimming in favor of ruggedly cutting the wheeled excess from the bottom of the pot and applying it instead as a finger-pinched handle. Some larger pieces are in fact two wheeled works adjoined on top of each other. Others, begun as wheel throws, are later given hand-coiled additions, or interjected with rhombus-shaped holes and overlaid glazings. There is no intentioned composition. While some works' pictorial imagery operates like an 'exquisite corpse,' Herman following the line of one image around the body of the pot into un-inscribed territory, in others the face of a female or a feline fills to the scale of the vase's surface. Few pieces in his output are ever entirely abandoned, often being reworked with a second glazing, a new appendage, or slit cut, that in fact makes the inside of the vessel into the achieved surface itself. In all processes, Herman maintains a curiosity that transcends vogue trajectories.

His ceramic work, begun after his established painting practice, informs the latter, as equal. From Xeroxes, printouts, and accrued art books, Herman's ceramics draw inspiration from such disparate influences as Japanese manga; the French writer and brother of Balthus, Pierre Klossowski's idiosyncratic drawings; 16th century artist Hans Baldung Grien, whose name appears on some of the vessels' etchings; the anti-paintings of Miro; and the lesser-known plaster sculptures of Schwitters. There are no prescribed or presupposed readings of gender or history. Despite the heavy medieval, obscure, or erotic references, the lack of horizon line on the large discs renders the pictures more of the material than encoding it.

Perhaps the most compelling truism is that no one in particular, among the prolific output of Roger Herman, behaves the same. All can be empathically imbued with a distinct character, yet as a whole, the work resists a notion of separate narrative bodies of work. In this, just as the experience of the maker in making, we are generously allowed to respond to and fixate on particulars that incite our individuality. As such, the ceramics directly communicate the present by way of one's experience of them. Roger Herman, prior to even his handling of a fifteen-pound block of clay, perpetually creates a condition in which his artworks can maintain this sense of presence hovering.