



LAGUNA BEACH, CA
Adam Silverman: "Clay and Space"
at Laguna Art Museum

Adam Silverman's exhibition, titled "Clay and Space," is as much about his theatrical installation as it is about his ceramic pots. Trained as an architect (and self-trained as a potter), Silverman was given the freedom to design this show, and he uses his skills to create four dramatic presentations of his work. Most of the work, titled *Untitled*, was created from 2008-13. In the first gallery, he displays 18 labor-intensive pieces, including spheres, gourds, cylinders and torsos, in sizes up to 14 inches tall. Here, Silverman achieves a range of dramatic textures and colors through multiple uses of glazes, chemicals and firings. The pieces, in blues, grays, browns, pinks, golden hues and whites, feature molten, cratered, and abraded surfaces. As Brooke Hodge observes in the accompanying catalogue, "The crusty, dry surfaces of some pots feel petrified, very un-pretty, as if they have come from the earth like fragments of ancient rock or lava."

In the second gallery, the viewer sees two large circular structures, each made of yellow bricks. Once inside each of these cavern-like brick rooms, numerous primitively fired pots in cylinder shapes greet the visitor. Silverman crafted these with local clay and fired them, piled up, in open pits on nearby Aliso Beach. The fire burns for a few hours, then the pots set in the cooling coal bed. The resulting pieces, displayed on charred planks, are dark ash, umber and golden, some with carbon marks. Silverman enjoys the process of creating these single-fired pieces, explaining in the catalog, "So those wood ash pots... they

make tons of smoke and that's a very particular process. And I love it." In the third room, eight pots in blue and bone shades are arranged on pedestals, appearing like a family, in relation to each other. These purely sculptural pieces, with no openings, smoother surfaces, and with round and egg shapes, possess contrasting nobility to the other pieces here. The last room is the most dramatic with just one off-white, textured pot on a stage, and a video projection aimed at it, creating the illusion of a moonscape.

Silverman expresses deference to the pioneering efforts of Peter Voulkos, John Mason, and Ken Price who brought ceramic art to a new level. Yet this artist's processes and styles are his own, expressed through his dramatic pieces, and displayed engagingly and inventively, through his keen understanding of design.

—LIZ GOLDNER

"UNTITLED INSTALLATION," 2013

Adam Silverman

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