

Artist Statement

Susannah Biondo

My work is about the containment and release of heat and light. I use ceramic materials to create forms which shape and articulate the energy source. In one body of work, I create large scale “kiln” sculptures that are fired outdoors as public performance pieces. I may use photo projection and audio effects to amplify the firing process. Other times, the ceramic process is left untouched by other medias. These pieces are always a response to the site and community in which they are built. The object afterward, whether functional or purely sculptural, is left as an artifact of the firing event. In another body of work, I use ceramic materials to make visible the metaphysical nature of energy exchange. I use cast glaze, porcelain, kanthal wire, and siverleaf to create “receptacles” for heat and light. The expandable glaze acts both functionally, as a refractory insulator, and sculpturally, as reference to earthly sites where such events may occur. Electricity is my animating principle and remains present in the “machine objects” I create. I retain “fire” through the form of electricity, as a means to demonstrate, rather than illustrate, energy exchange. Electricity is “fire” made contemporary. These “machine objects” are an antithesis to the outdoor firing pieces—they are intimate, quiet, and demand a viewer’s readiness to suspend his/her disbelief. One is asked to invest in the subtle incurring storyline. The “object drawings”, that is the sculptures without electrical current, represent a moment past. I cut into blocks of material to excavate a porcelain shape—a “drawing” that is an artifact of the firing process. The undulating line of porcelain is the meeting point between mass and cavity—the collision of two energy forces. I excavate this path as a linear record of the creative moment. These “object drawings” create a post-phenomenon experience, acting as an artifact of some great transformation that once occurred.

“Thus ‘the eminent dignity of the arts of fire’ arises from the fact that their products bear the most profoundly human mark, the mark of primitive love...The forms created by fire are modeled more than any other...”

Gaston Bachelard

My interest in ceramic phenomenology and material experimentation is core to my studio practice. Reference to the ceramic firing process is present in both gas and electric form. My creative explorations with these forces are manifested through ceramic materials, but they speak of greater relationships, both personal and geological, that serve as life’s driving force.