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the logic of objects

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the logic of objects

by

David B. Eichelberger

A THESIS

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The human mind assimilates information and experiences quickly and constantly, and is aided by mental systems that we rely on to function. We classify the input of our lives with extreme efficiency. Our notions about the things we encounter in the world are learned from past experiences, and these expectations help us file the data of our lives. My work is composed to create pause. I am interested in slowing down the processes of assimilation by manipulating our expectations, and extending events measured in microseconds into saturated and engaging experiences. Functional qualities, visual rhythms, and exaggerated proportions are some of the elements I employ in the objects I make to quietly challenge our preconceived notions and our expectations.

The importance of genuine utility in my ceramic work is precluded by the desire to borrow a certain quality from the vocabulary usable objects: familiarity. Pottery contains an implied invitation. The intentional placement of openings, lids, and handles in my work conveys the specificity of function, clarifying that the objects I make have an intended purpose. The exact function is less obvious, and a situation is created that pairs a sense of knowing with a sense of mystery. The desire to identify the purpose of an object is an open invitation for continued exploration. Scrutiny and inspection reveal

both undulations in edges once considered straight and subtle variations on flat planes. These details act as rewards for a heightened level of engagement.

The objects I make exhibit a compositional preference for repetition over variety, and I position repeated elements in regular, metered fashion. This allows the eye to travel predictable paths across my work. A rhythm develops, with a cadence that promotes a rambling exploration of the form. Edges and lines are also measured, and they exhibit a confident, grounded quality that guides visual investigation in a steady and considered way. The mild restlessness of the viewer, caused by their derailed expectations, is placated by regularity.

Vessels for containment are, by their own nature, the product of a desire for order. They are tools to categorize our environment, and provide place by defining the spaces they create. The interior spaces in my work are made special by manipulating access to them. Sometimes small lids open into large spaces, other times lids are large enough to require special attention during removal, and some interiors are difficult or impossible to reach. Given these circumstances, the vessels most often contain only a rarefied space. Simply reaching the interior, literally or visually, is an event, a private ritual, that is a self-justifying endeavor.

My work displays an attraction to a massing of materials. Industrial architecture and earthen construction are related to the solid volumes in the forms, and the masses I make contribute to an ironic sense of small-scale monumentality. The exaggerated

proportions of my work maintain compositional balance through the careful manipulation of a variety of visual elements, including volume and mass and the delicate placement of details. The objects I make appear to be probing their own identity in a subtle and playful way, intentionally undermining their apparent seriousness. Upon investigation, a codified order both mysterious and liberating emerges in the work, and makes it resonate with my intentions.

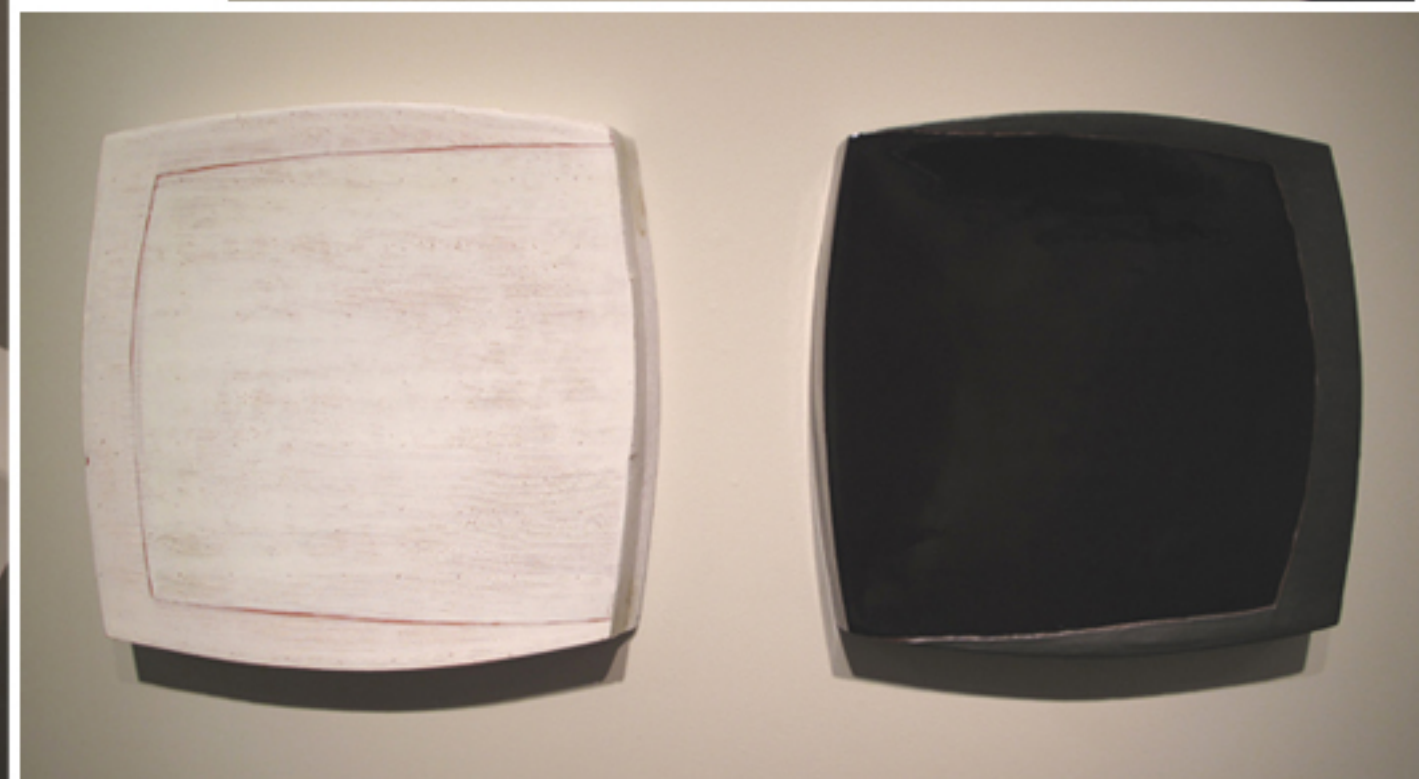
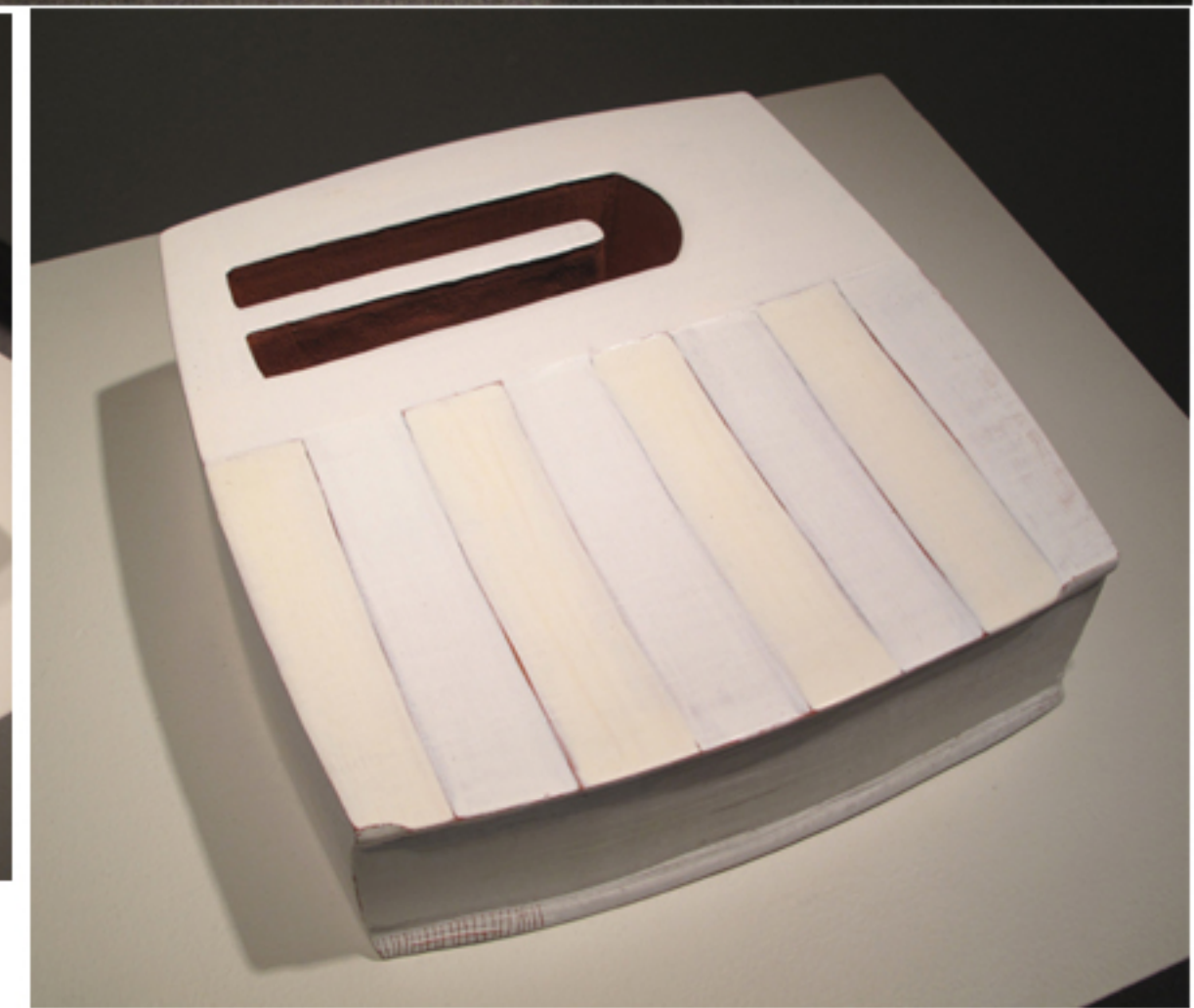
The objects I make are simultaneously an anthropological study and an artistic endeavor, and incorporate an attempt to understand the world we live in, through making. My work has been informed by particular objects, including Japanese Mingei, or folk craft. Not exclusive to that country, but found worldwide, handmade objects have the ability to be fully embedded within the cultures in which they are found, and to reflect the lifestyles and social conditions of the maker. I intend the same level of integration between my work and the society from which it draws. I use surfaces that refer to a variety of sources, and include shiny glazes and polished slips. This use of various treatments helps prolong the assignment of a clear historical lineage to the work. Instead, it can both be rooted in the present and also have a sense of being from elsewhere. By focusing on a rudimentary treatment of the surface, the form of an object I make takes center stage.

The composed nature of my work reflects the quiet focus of my investigations. I have a disciplined approach, aimed at augmenting one's engagement with his or her surroundings by creating objects that contain cryptic lessons. I appreciate the idea that

the forms I make have a challenging complexity that can be read on multiple levels.

When one pauses, then engages in an unspoken conversation with the objects I make, my intentions have been realized.

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