

Andy Shaw

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Artist's Statement

I have an idea for a play, or at least for the format of one, in which human actors are replaced by empty costumes set among the necessary theatrical props. Aside from lighting changes and scene dialogue read from the wings, there is no other activity onstage. Early innovators in motion studies discovered persistence of vision, in which the retina briefly retains flashed still images. Utilizing this phenomenon to develop the perception of motion, they would show a sequence of images knowing that the brain would fill the time gaps between frames. I would apply an interpretation of this discovery to the play to see whether the tone of the dramatic dialogue can bring life to the vacancy in the costumes through the perception and imagination of the audience.

In my pottery, I examine this format of vacancy and the tenuous balance it requires of the viewer-participant in establishing completion. Knowing that the porcelain will become active components within a home, I design each piece so that it can adapt to place and to the personal preferences of each homeowner. In my studio I resist the artistic impulse to create overall resolution, opting instead to leave room for improvisation by the cook whose own need for creative resolution is just as necessary as mine. By leaving the glaze color neutral, cooks recognize the invitation for a spinach, strawberry and almond salad or perhaps for a grilled turkey club panini with purple onion. In this way, color is not a fixed quality in the pottery, allowing it to have an active role in daily cooking.

Paring the tableware down for utilitarian needs, the round forms develop consistency within a dinner set while the patterns, variations of lines and grids, offer individual distinction while maintaining the unity of the set. Patterns extend to the rims of plates and seemingly beyond to interact with the incidental, linear, domestic patterns present in shadows and in the architectural elements of wooden floors and stair railings. My patterns respond to contemporary home design trends while bridging to the pliability of handcrafted textiles. The generalized character of the patterns allow the porcelain to adapt to place easily, becoming a complement to a diversity of existing home designs.

In order for a pot to be functional it must be used. As the potter I design opportunities for the homeowner to add color to the porcelain and to incorporate it actively with other objects currently in the home. These purposefully designed thematic openings promote substantial connections between the pottery and its audience by drawing out practical and aesthetic utility within an advocacy for creative living.