

4 Questions: Artist Liz Larner

For more than 30 years, Liz Larner has built an artistic practice that proposes new notions of objects and object making that extends quite naturally from a minimalist language. Her exquisite ceramics debuted at the Aspen Art Museum last week, a nice pairing to X, her outdoor stainless steel sculpture that has been on view outside on the museum's grounds since early November. We chatted with the Los Angeles-based artist on color, material, and form.



Liz Larner, "iii (inflexion)," 2014 – 2015, ceramic, epoxy, and pigment. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

The ceramic works are distinctly different than your stainless steel work on view at the Aspen Art Museum, in color, material, weight, size, and feeling. Can you talk about the dialogue between materials in your practice?

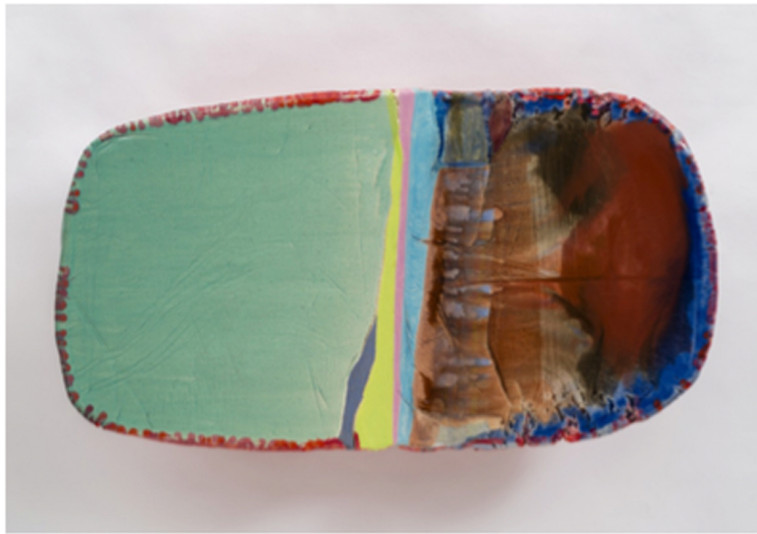
Materials have meaning inside and outside of the context by which we receive them. There is a slippage between what something is called, what something is, what we perceive, and what something means. The materials I use shape our awareness of them by either increasing or destabilizing how we understand them. For instance the sort of hardness and shininess of the mirror polished cast stainless steel X in relation to the high fired ceramic wall works that are covered in glossy colored epoxy resin, open up a consideration of hardness and shininess where both can be described as such but the difference between them is very distinct. The dialogue is one that begins with a kind of doubting and distinguishing and moves into a deeper understanding of the innate possibilities within the materials.



Liz Larner, "v (calefaction)," 2015, ceramic, glaze, stones and minerals. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

This is the first time the ceramics have really been shown exclusive of other non-ceramic works. Can you speak about how ceramic was first introduced to your practice? Why is this a material you are looking to explore? In what ways is ceramic most interesting for you?

In the late 90's I wanted to make cast porcelain pieces from two foam core models but I didn't know much about ceramics. Ken Price, an artist I have always admired, was teaching ceramics at the time and I was able to audit his classes for a couple of semesters. Though I didn't learn anything about casting porcelain, I did learn a lot about clay bodies, slab building, glazing, firing, and the history of ceramics from him. With that experience I was ready to take on slip casting. I initially wanted to work with porcelain for the smile sculptures. These are faceted crescent shaped forms that allude to teeth. Of course it isn't exactly the same material as the ceramic used for dental restoration but the word porcelain carries it through, and the qualities of porcelain that make it desirable for say fine china—translucency and hardness, are also those sought for pearly whites and what I wanted those works to consist of. It was after the smile series that I began to work with clay slabs. As I worked with different clays and ceramics more of the extreme malleability and ubiquity of it sunk in along with the sense that it comes from underground. It is such an old material and *métier*, it has so much history but for me it seems still wide open and very emotionally resonant in its more unperfected states.



Liz Larner, "ii (inflexion)," 2013 – 2015, ceramic, epoxy, and pigment. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

In regards to color, how do you use it? In what ways is your exploration of color tied to your exploration of material or the object? How does experimentation and unpredictability play into this exploration?

I mostly use color to add more space and articulation to the form, to describe or intensify the form and sometimes to overcome the form. I also use color for its emotional qualities. In the works that will be shown in Aspen the fired ceramic structures are the precursors to the color and I use the color to bring out something innate in them. The color encourages them. In both the epoxy and the glaze surfaces experimentation and unpredictability guide the process – they are the process.

Can you speak on the intersection of the natural and the manmade, of the mathematical or scientific and metaphysical elements in your practice?

Though this is a very canny question, I don't like to be pinned down in short forms for such big questions. In all honesty I think I address this best in the art I make.

Liz Larner is on view at the Aspen Art Museum through June 6, 2016.