



Mark Dally Ceramics

Artists Statement

Concept

I like to make sculptures which suggest a mysterious function that is never explained. Does it really have a function? I try to engage viewers through humour and curiosity to create their own answers about the value and importance of the piece to them.

I start with everyday objects we use and recognize – an old lightbulb, a plastic toy, a bit of tubing – things that have been manufactured, things at a scale which we handle, and then redirect them. To create ambiguity I divert from their familiar, mass-produced origins by using refined workmanship, adding elaborate surface decoration, platinum, gold, and a shiny finish to imply value and legitimacy.

Underpinning these intentions is my need as a studio ceramic artist to create, by traditional ceramic techniques, a beautifully constructed and decorated ceramic artifact that lasts.

‘Peep’ is my most recent in a series of 3D visual graphic sculptures exploring inverted functionalism and notions questioning our relationship with the purely decorative arts in contemporary culture.

Technique

To make my work I start by making plaster moulds from found objects, hand-modelled shapes and lathe-turned shapes. I slipcast them into white earthenware clay components which I join when leather-hard, then decorate with sliptrailed, stencilled and brushed slips. After the initial bisque firing I glaze with a combination of underglazes and earthenware glazes. Finally, in a third firing I apply metallic lustres and liquid bright gold and platinum.

Influences

My ideas grow out of my childhood fascination with 1950s and ‘60s sci-fi like Robbie the Robot’s fake functionalism, or the quaint aerodynamics of Dan Dare’s ‘streamlined’ comic book space rockets. The possibilities for transformation appeal to me in cartoon animation such as in Fantasia and the Fleischer brothers’ Hoppity Goes to Town. John Tenniel’s odd yet familiar composite characters illustrating Alice in Wonderland, seen afresh, inspire me.

My decorative style is influenced by my interests in the modish textiles and surface patterns of the 1950s such as Ridgway’s ‘Homemaker’ pattern, and in pre-Hispanic South American and Australian Aboriginal art.