

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE



Alwyn O'Brien:

Essay in Objects

March 22 to April 28, 2012

Opening Reception

Thursday, March 22, 6 – 8pm

Gallery hours are:

Thurs. - Sat. 11:00am - 5:00pm

Tuesday & Wednesday by appointment

Additional images are available upon request

Left:

The Last Harlequin, 2010

Porcelain and Glaze

17" x 11" x 7 7/8"

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present our second solo exhibition by Canadian artist Alwyn O'Brien. The artist creates both slip cast and hand built vessel shaped sculptures. The show is a direct response to the artist's passionate work in a nursing home where personal objects act as triggers and links to the past. The works manifest a hybrid identity as deconstructed period pieces, recalling the exaggerated motion and biomorphic animation of the highly decorative baroque. For O'Brien, "The surface has become the object rather than the decoration. It has become free of the vessel's three-dimensional form, and is able to claim its own space." Uninhibited by the functional surface restrictions of a vessel, O'Brien's hand-rolled coils and fragile shavings of porcelain activate the overall shape and act like moving tendrils creating the appearance of motion, destruction, and despair. The slip cast pieces are a counter balance to the more delicate works in that weight and volume are more considered.

The works on view present forms and ideas that have evolved slowly and deliberately in tandem with the artist's working process. O'Brien's sculptures are informed by accretions of history, memory, and the residue of experience. Irregular in shape and chaotic in appearance, the works are rooted in classical historical forms. Glazed bright yellow while intentionally exposing the raw white body of the clay, the dramatic bends and twists of "The Last Harlequin" seem both celebratory and despondent in their embrace of and resignation to the medium. The show is a response to the unspoken histories of objects and the passage of time, especially its relationship to aging. The works/objects thus become stand-ins for the break-down of human cognizance and the capacity of memory and emotions, manifesting endless interpretations and multiple viewing angles.

Alwyn O'Brien ceramic practice has taken her across Canada, studying at Capilano College, in Vancouver, Sheridan College of Ontario, the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. She received her MFA in 2010 the University of Washington in Seattle and her BFA from Emily Carr Institute. In 2009 she was the recipient of a Mayor's Arts Award from Vancouver; B.C. O'Brien was one of four nominees for the 2011 RBC Foundation's Emerging Artist People's Choice Award.