



museum of arts and design

MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN EXHIBITION EXPLORES FUNK ART'S INFLUENCES IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY CLAY SCULPTURE

Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence in Ceramic Sculpture
March 18, 2023—August 27, 2023



Images (from left to right): Robert Arneson, *Self-Portrait of the Artist Losing His Marbles*, 1965. Photo: Ed Watkins; and Diana Yesenia Alvarado, *Lista Para Volar*, 2022. Photo: Josh White, courtesy Jeffrey Deitch, NY and LA.

NEW YORK, NY (February 16, 2023) – This spring, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present the first major museum survey of humor and irreverence in modern and contemporary clay sculpture. On view from March 18–August 27, 2023, *Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence in Ceramic Sculpture* brings together 50 artworks from the 1960s to the present day in which clay is used as a tool for critique and satire. In the exhibition, pieces by artists of the originating Funk art generation will be placed next to work by contemporary artists who are expanding on Funk's legacy of humor, subversion, and expressive figuration.

"Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence Ceramic Sculpture arrives at a moment when clay as a sculptural medium is receiving unprecedented attention from the art world," said Elissa Auther, MAD's Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator. "Taking advantage of MAD's significant collection of historical Funk ceramics, *Funk You Too!* examines the critical contexts that gave rise to the prominence

of humor in ceramic sculpture and advocates for the ongoing relevance of Funk ceramics to a new generation of artists.”

Funk ceramics first emerged on the West Coast in the 1960s, created by a group of artists who shared an anti-establishment viewpoint towards expectations of “good art.” While conscious of the irreverent attitude and aesthetics of their predecessors, the new generation of artists featured in *Funk You Too!* are examining the potential for humor in clay through a rainbow of perspectives. Carrying Funk into the future, these artists are tapping into the power of a good joke to address some of the most pressing social and political issues of our day.

In the gallery, works by artists of the Funk generation from the 1960s through the 1980s, such as Robert Arneson, Viola Frey, Patti Warashina, and Howard Kottler, illustrate the groundbreaking shift in the field of ceramics caused by their avant-garde artistic production. Contemporary sculptures by Diana Yesenia Alvarado, Alex Anderson, Natalia Arbelaez, Genesis Belanger, Sharif Farrag, Salvador Jiménez-Flores, Yvette Mayorga, Ruby Neri, Woody De Othello, Alake Shilling, and Maryam Yousif expand the legacy of this important period in ceramic history through work that, intentionally and not, echoes the Funk sentiment.

For these contemporary artists, humor is not merely an aesthetic strategy but a tool of resistance, resilience, and healing. Utilizing the expressive figuration, anthropomorphism, and cartoonish or amateur aesthetics associated with Funk ceramics, they subversively establish accessible platforms for dialogue and engagement with profound and complicated narratives. However, these artists’ practices are disengaged from the original movement’s self-consciousness of craft’s and clay’s low status. They are creating work in an increasingly multidisciplinary environment where the hierarchical boundaries between craft and art are dissolving. Notably, the artists in this exhibition mirror a contemporary art world with significantly more diversity than in Funk art’s prime.

“Many of the contemporary artists in the exhibition have attracted widespread critical attention. Yet, their work has rarely been contextualized in relation to the history of ceramics, craft and the broader history of Funk art,” said Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy, independent curator, writer, and curator of the exhibition. “*Funk You Too!* is an opportunity to not only contextualize contemporary ceramic production but also celebrate a major turning point in the history of American ceramics.”

On March 21 at MAD, Vizcarrondo-Laboy will be in conversation with exhibiting artists Alake Shilling, Natalia Arbelaez, Sharif Farrag, and Salvador Jiménez-Flores to mark the opening of *Funk You Too!* The artists will discuss their irreverent approaches to serious subject matter, the important role of the cute, cheeky, and subversive in contemporary ceramics, and clay’s rise to sculptural stardom. During the summer, *Funk You Too!* artists, including Didi Rojas, will lead clay-based workshops for adults and teens.

An audio tour for *Funk You Too!* will be available on the Museum’s mobile guide on Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies, part of its longstanding commitment to supporting digital innovation in the arts. On the

app, visitors will be able to hear directly from select exhibition artists about their work and practice.

The accompanying 112-page exhibition catalog, entitled *Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence in Ceramic Sculpture*, features over 75 color illustrations and essays by Vizcarrondo-Laboy (“Funk You Too!”) and writer, curator, and educator Garth Johnson (“Finding Funk”) of the Everson Museum, Syracuse, NY.

For more information on *Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence in Ceramic Sculpture* and related programming, please visit madmuseum.org.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Funk You Too! Humor and Irreverence Ceramic Sculpture is curated by guest curator Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy. The exhibition is made possible, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Research for the exhibition and publication was supported by a Craft Research Fund grant from the Center for Craft.

ARTISTS ON VIEW (ALPHABETICAL)

Diana Yesenia Alvarado (US, b. 1992); Alex Anderson (US, b. 1990); Natalia Arbelaez (US, b. 1983); Robert Arneson (US, 1930–1992); Clayton Bailey (US, 1939–2020); Genesis Belanger (US, b. 1978); Sharif Farrag (US, b. 1993); Viola Frey (US, 1933–2004); Melvino Garretti (US, b. 1946); David Gilhooly (US, 1943–2001); Salvador Jiménez-Flores (Mexico, b. 1985); Howard Kottler (US, 1930–1989); Yvette Mayorga (US, b. 1991); Ruby Neri (US, b. 1970); Woody De Othello (US, b. 1991); Maija Peeples-Bright (Latvia, b. 1942); Didi Rojas (Colombia, b. 1993); Sally Saul (US, b. 1946); Sandra Shannonhouse (US, b. 1947); Richard Shaw (US, b. 1941); Alake Shilling (US, b. 1993); Magdalena Suarez Frimkess (Venezuela, b. 1929); Chris Unterseher (US, b. 1943); Peter VandenBerge (Netherlands, b. 1935); Patti Warashina (US, b. 1940); Maryam Yousif (Iraq, b. 1985).

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum’s founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum’s curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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