

Ashley Kenneth Chavis

Artist Statement:

The pursuit of an artistic identity began when I was a child. By growing up in an environment that embraced self-sufficiency and hand-made items, I unknowingly developed an acute sense for household objects and an appreciation for craftsmanship. In high school, I reconnected with this visual denominator and set a path for artistic discovery.

Although my endeavors in visual art are varied, my most consistent output fuses pottery, drawing, design, and surface texture on fired clay. The pots that I create are explorations of drawing and surface while hinting at voices of pottery making history. Artists such as Peter Voulkos, Ron Meyers, and Mary Barringer influence some of my methodologies since their work explores three-dimensional form while capturing tactile information. In addition to clay artists, the Swiss-born artist of the early to mid 20th century, Paul Klee, has provided inspiration to explore mark making and symbolism mixed media such as oil paint, watercolor and pen.

I use cups, bowls, platters, and other pottery forms to convey thoughts through surface texture. I combine several construction techniques like throwing, slab construction, and coiling to build my work. Most of my surface embellishment occurs at the leather hard stage where I enjoy altering, carving, and applying iconic drawings. Since my glaze palette is simple, I rely heavily on textural variations and small color accents to adorn my work. Most of my pots are reduction fired to cone 10, but I do experiment with vapor firings such as soda, salt, and wood.

In 2006, I began teaching observational drawing and reflected upon drafting exercises from high school. Those lessons influenced my appreciation for isometric renderings and detailed studies of machine components. The residual effect of those mathematical drawings is currently incorporated into mixed media on paper that combine pen, watercolor, and collage. The drawings that I create are explorations of personal narratives through vernacular objects. For example, the fishing bobber, pliers, tack, and jack are small; common objects that I have adopted to offer a personal symbolic language. I find humor in using simple, ordinary objects but also try to think of these objects as having a duality in meaning and a personal significance.