



# STATE OF CERAMICS *.edu edition*

## Cultural Objects & Ritual

a discussion guide by Cathy Lu

October 16, 2020

# ***CULTURAL OBJECTS & RITUAL***

Our objects—who makes them, how we use them, and how we preserve them—are indicative of who we are and to which cultures we belong. Depending upon our relationship to those objects and cultures—whether we are generators and/or consumers, whether we are participants in power structures and/or marginalized by them, whether we are ‘insiders’ and/or ‘outsiders’—we can misrepresent and misunderstand entire communities. In this discussion we will question the validity of an ‘authentic’ object, examine how value and values change across time, and delve into the fine line between cultural sharing and cultural appropriation. How can enduring ceramic objects contribute to representing, reflecting, and revising our understanding of ourselves?

This document contains questions and prompts for our conversation as well as images of artwork that contextualize it.

## Questions:

- How do we consider the cultural value of everyday objects in comparison to the cultural value of artifacts displayed by museums? For example, an ancient ceramic water jug may have once been considered at the time of its use to have a similar value as the plastic cups or disposable coffee cups we use today. How and why does the value of an object increase or decrease over time? Is this reflective of cultural values?
- Throughout ceramic history, we see examples of cultural exchange. For example, Chinese blue and white porcelain would have been impossible without the influence of Persian ceramics and their use of cobalt. Delftware would not exist if not for the craze for imported Chinese blue and white pottery. How do we differentiate between cultural sharing and cultural appropriation?
- Is there such a thing as an authentic object? How does an object retain authenticity, or can it lose its authenticity? Can a replica be authentic? (ie. What is the difference between a blue and white vase in a museum and a blue and white vase being sold for \$10 in a Chinatown trinket shop?)
- Who do ceramic artifacts belong to? Who does culture belong to? Is culture a commodity?
- In discussions of historical ceramics, groups of people--not infrequently BIPOC groups--are often central, but in discussions of contemporary ceramics, individual people--most frequently white individuals-- are seen by many to be centralized. Why has there been a shift in focus from groups to individuals despite the communal nature of ceramics? How can there be more equity in the centralization of individuals? (For example, groups like the Color Network are organizing to prioritize BIPOC)



Cathy Lu, *Afterlife*, 2015, ceramic



Cathy Lu, *Afterlife*, 2015, ceramic



Cathy Lu, *Customs Declaration*, 2019  
Ceramic and steel cable





Cathy Lu, *Tree*, 2020  
ceramic, bamboo, zipties,  
produce bags, bricks



Cathy Lu, *Security Fence and Drain*, 2020, porcelain, sandbags and concrete





Cathy Lu, *Traffic Cones*, 2020, porcelain



Cathy Lu, *Traffic Cones*, 2020, porcelain





Christina Erives, Panza Llena Corazon Contento, 2017, earthenware



*I Can See You But I Don't Hear You*  
Ceramic, underglaze, glaze  
42 x 32 x 20 inches  
2016



*Messenger*  
Ceramic, glaze, carved wood, white gold overglaze  
54 x 21 x 20 inches / 137.2 x 53.3 x 50.8 cm  
2018

Woody de Othello





Woody de Othello,  
*Rest in Power, Let it not be in Vain*, 2018



Ebitenyafe Baralaye  
*No Lie*  
2018





Linda Lopez, *Furry Sculpture Series*, 2019



Stephanie Shih, *Oriental Grocery*, 2019

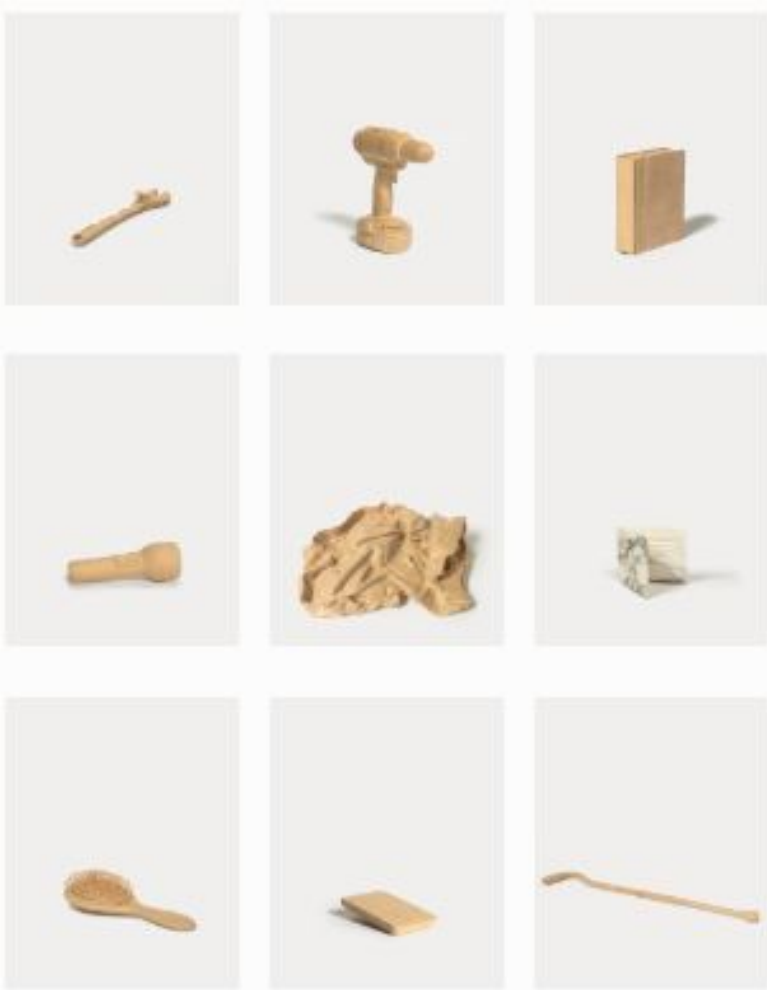




Stephanie Shih, *Oriental Grocery*, 2019



Reniel Del Rosario  
*Array of Canned Goods*  
2020  
Photographic collage of ceramic



Cara Levine, *This is not a Gun*, 2016 - present, wood

Objects mistaken by police officers for a gun, which resulted in the civilians, predominantly POC, predominantly black, being shot.





*This Is Not A Gun: Public Participant Workshop #13  
Beyond Resistance: ACLU California Conference and Lobby Day April 2019*

*Cara Levine, This is not a Gun, 2016 -  
present, Clay Workshops*





A selection of Toy Trucks made from various TINAG workshops since 2017.  
Charles Kinsey was shot in July 2016 while holding a toy truck, police mistook for a gun. He is living.

Cara Levine, *This is not a Gun*, 2016 - present, Clay Workshops



AKA AR-15-0416200732 (Blacksburg, Virginia), 2018

Porcelain



AKA AR-15-0416200732 (Blacksburg, Virginia), 2018

Porcelain, fabric box

Keiko Fukazawa, *Peacemaker Series*, 2018