

Andy Warhol's Interview

SUE HAVENS TURNS CERAMIC ART INTO PIECES OF POP CULTURE

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The interplay of painting and sculpture is at work at Sue Havens's new show at Park Place Gallery in Brooklyn, now on view through the end of April. Appropriately titled "Brick and Mortar," the pieces in the show share a certain materiality, whether ceramic or painting on paper. The washed-out colors, varied patterns, and irregular forms bring to mind ancient tile work or woven rag rugs derived in part from her travels to Turkey, where her husband's family lives. "When I was there, I took hundreds of photos," says Havens, "old delivery trucks, hand-woven rugs from the family kitchen, and Turkish embroidery motifs—all which I drew from to make this work."

At the same time, the patterns—replete with polka dots, stripes and squiggles—suggest something vaguely pop cultural, and give the pieces a sense of playfulness. This, Havens attributes to her habit of collecting material with interesting visual ideas: "Old plaid and sweater fabrics, wrapping paper, book covers, food packages, Coney Island hot dog containers, thrift store paintings have all been absorbed into my painting language," she explains.

Her ceramic pieces add another dimension to that pop playfulness by also suggesting something formal, an ancient Grecian urn. And the material itself, clay turned to stone, has a timeless quality. Many of the works have visible irregularities in the glaze applications, which Havens achieves through raku firing, a process in which the clay form is removed from the kiln while still glowing hot, and then placed in a container filled with combustible material.

Havens, who had never worked with clay before this series, discovered raku at the ceramics studio at the University of South Florida, where she is an assistant professor of art. As a self-described "maker," the creative shift was exciting to her. "I would run to the studio each day, forgetting to eat." She approached the works as a direct

extension of the shaped paintings and paper constructions she had been developing over the past few years, “a kind of modular building.” In keeping with the show’s title, Havens has arrived at something that feels solid and hands-on.

“SUE HAVENS: BRICK AND MORTAR” RUNS THROUGH APRIL 29, 2018 AT THE PARK PLACE GALLERY.

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