NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS



ROGER HERMAN

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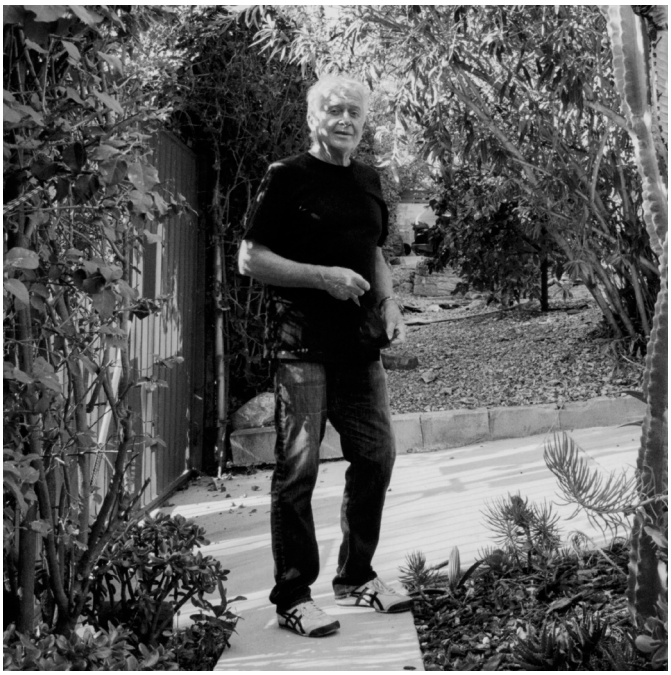
CURRICULUM VITAE 60



BIOGRAPHY

ROGER HERMAN

b. 1947, Saarbruecken, DE
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA



Roger Herman is an artist who works across mediums, primarily focusing on colorful ceramics and canvases that exude a casual, raw vivacity. Herman begins his ceramics process with wheel-thrown forms that are stacked, cut, altered, and decorated. Often featuring bright colors painted underneath dark, glossy glazes, the pots range from small, handheld cups or bowls to massive vases, urn-like pots, and large platters. Drips of paint run down the exterior of hefty vessels, whose sides are sharply cut with irregular peepholes and freckled nubs of glaze that lend a haptic sensuality. Herman also employs many drawing and painting techniques, including inlay, scraffito, wax resist, and oxide wash. Not bound by one style, some pots are abstract color fields while others contain figurative elements. Often fired multiple times, the pots exude a considered casualness that is also open, honest, and exuberant.

An instinctual, sensory relationship to color and textures guides Herman's work, which expands into mediums such as drawing, books, clothing, and woodcut prints. His wild blends of quickly-applied lines, shapes, and opacities layer together in formally intricate compositions. Herman's imagery- -drawn equally from pop culture and and art historical tropes--reads like an archeology of styles: manga, erotica, surrealism, Paleolithic cave paintings. Like an exquisite corpse, the only prevailing constant is the randomness of choice, the embrace of chance with an inexhaustible curiosity for the renewing nature of the painting process in itself.

Roger Herman holds an MFA from the Akademie der Kuenste, Karlsruhe, DE. His recent solo exhibitions include Louis Lefebvre Galerie, Paris, FR; Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE; Praz Delavallande, Los Angeles, CA; Carpenters Workshop Gallery, New York, NY and London, UK; Hunter College, New York, NY; Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY; and Gestaad, CH, among many others. He co-founded, with painter Hubert Schmalix, the legendary Los Angeles gallery Black Dragon Society, and is professor emeritus for the department of painting and drawing at UCLA.

SAMPLE WORKS



*sample selection does not reflect current availability



red yellow blue with, 2 blue knobs, 2025
Glazed ceramic
11 x 15 in
27.9 x 38.1 cm
(ROH25.002)







green face, red nose, 2025
Glazed ceramic
17 x 3 in
43.2 x 7.6 cm
(ROH25.007)



Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
18 x 12 in
45.7 x 30.5 cm
(ROH23.023)



Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
19 x 11 1/2 x 8 1/4 in
48.3 x 29.2 x 21 cm
(ROH23.026)







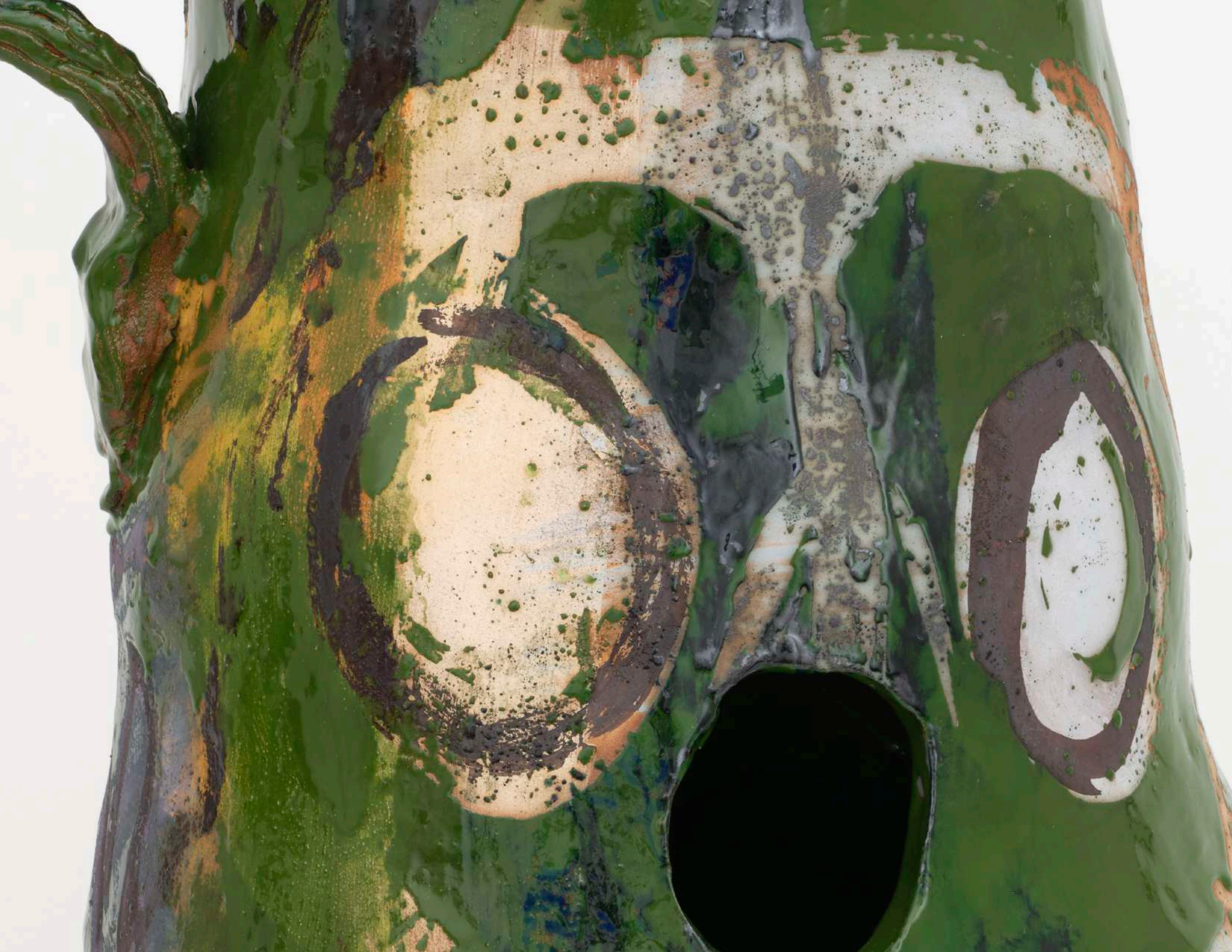
Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
23 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 9 1/2 in
59.7 x 31.8 x 24.1 cm
(ROH23.033)



Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
23 x 13 x 17 in
58.4 x 33 x 43.2 cm
(ROH23.070)









Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
19 1/4 x 14 x 8 1/2 in
48.9 x 35.6 x 21.6 cm
(ROH23.054)







Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
23 1/2 x 20 x 18 1/2 in
59.7 x 50.8 x 47 cm
(ROH23.074)





Tall Vessel, 2022
Ceramic
24 x 17 x 14 in
61 x 43.2 x 35.6 cm
(ROH22.008)





Untitled, 2022
Glazed ceramic
15 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 2 1/4 in
40 x 40 x 5.7 cm
(ROH23.168)





Large Vessel, 2022
Ceramic
26 x 22 1/2 x 20 in
66 x 57.1 x 50.8 cm
(ROH22.009)





SELECTED EXHIBITONS AND PROJECTS

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

CALIFORNIA POPPIES
2026
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA, US

FROM CALIFORNIA WITH LOVE
2024
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
PARIS, FR

MOTEL CALIFORNIA
2024
NINO MIER GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY, US

KERAMIK
2023
NINO MIER GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA, US

CERAMIC
2021
SORRY WE'RE CLOSED
BRUSSELS, BE

BLUMENS
2019
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY, US



CALIFORNIA POPPIES

2026
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA, US

California Poppies is a solo exhibition devoted to multidisciplinary artist Roger Herman, who is recognized as the West Coast parallel of the 1980s Neo-Expressionist movement. Presented at Carpenters Los Angeles, the exhibition shows how Herman's depiction of flowers and mountains form part of a gestural and vividly colorful painting practice that blossoms across both canvas and ceramic works, unveiling an assemblage of color, texture, and form rooted in observations of the natural world.

Herman was born in Germany but has lived in Los Angeles since 1977. From oil paintings to ceramic vessels and tables, the artist's artworks are defined by an unpredictable expressiveness that celebrates imperfection, spontaneity, and intuition. A professor at UCLA, Herman has long been a prominent figure in California's artistic community, with his work held in prestigious collections such as Los Angeles County Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Hammer Museum, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

A series of large-scale canvases exemplify the vibrant painterly expression that lies at the core of Herman's practice, with brushstrokes, dashes and lines building substance, texture and color. The Poppies paintings show multi-hued, intricately layered scenes of leaves and flowers, while Mountain is a landscape painting composed of bold, broad brushstrokes in blue, turquoise and white. Another painting features the eerie image of a human skull – a recurring motif in Herman's work that, contrasting with his otherwise vivacious style, evokes the inevitability of death. These expansive paintings illustrate how Herman's experimental approach to color produces captivating compositions and striking imagery sprawling across surfaces of significant width and height.

Herman's ceramic works, sculpted from wheel-thrown clay, echo the gestural and spontaneous vibrancy found in their wall-mounted canvas counterparts. His large, hand-crafted vessels transcend traditional ceramic design techniques with their irregular shapes, spontaneous voids and protrusions. Ignited by Herman's fascination with the transformative power of color during the glazing process, each piece is marked by a painterly approach that treats the clay as a canvas.

A dining table and a coffee table, meanwhile feature tabletops consisting of square ceramic panels that reflect the distinctive painterly expression of Herman's vessels and canvas works, The works show how the artist incorporates clay into functional structures, imbuing them with the same vibrant approach to color and composition.

A collection of tiny ceramic cups from Herman's Mescal series are modelled after a jicara – a traditional Mexican cup made from a half-dried fruit and used to drink mezcal. The glazing on the pots emulates the same textures and techniques seen in the larger ceramic works and the paintings.

By transforming imperfection and spontaneity into an expressive, evocative artistic form, Herman stands as a pioneering example within contemporary art and design practices. Showcasing his polyphonous orchestrations of colour and form, and his unpredictable and experimental way of depicting nature's materiality, this exhibition shows how the artist pushes the boundaries of both ceramic art and painting.









FROM CALIFORNIA WITH LOVE

2024
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
PARIS, FR

Herman is known for his polyphonous orchestrations that embrace imperfection and incompleteness, in a practice that has evolved over five decades. Featuring recent works produced from 2015 onwards, the exhibition celebrates the gestural, spontaneous vibrancy of Herman's colourful creations, illustrating why he came to be known as the West Coast parallel of 1980s neo-Expressionism.

At the core of the exhibition is a series of dynamic and multifaceted handcrafted ceramic pieces sculpted from wheel-thrown clay, which exude energy and highlight the artist's experimental approach. They include Untitled 154 (2023) and Untitled 160 (2023), which are adorned with vivid colours and varying textures, reflecting Herman's fascination with the transformative power of colour during the glazing process – a theme that he has passionately explored since the late 1990s.

More than functional vases, the irregular shapes, spontaneous voids and protrusions of these pieces transcend traditional ceramic design techniques, with vibrant, quickly executed expressionistic compositions applied beneath glossy glazes. Evoking a unique and unpredictable painterly expression that celebrates imperfection, spontaneity and intuition, each piece is marked by an approach that treats the clay as a blank canvas, allowing brush strokes, dashes and lines to build texture and colour in innovative ways.

Complementing the ceramics is a series of large-scale paintings that echo the same expressive, experimental energy, testifying to the artist's instinctual relationship to colour and composition across different mediums. They include Pink Sky, Green Window (2023) and Untitled - Yellow, Green, Red (2023), which feature abstract, evocative and boldly colourful painterly gestures. These paintings share a cohesive space with the ceramics in the gallery, illustrating how Herman's instinctive artistic methods developed through his experimental work with clay, kilns and glazes.

Born in Germany and relocating to the US in 1977, Herman quickly became immersed in California's vibrant art scene, which greatly influenced his subsequent work. With works ranging from figurative to abstract, Herman's journey reflects a commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional mediums, evident in the unpredictable and experimental nature of his works. His focus on colour and glazing processes, as well as his dedication to embracing imperfections, resonates with broader movements in contemporary art that challenge conventional norms. As a teacher at UCLA, Herman has been a prominent figure in the artistic community, with his work featured in galleries worldwide and held in prestigious collections such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).









MOTEL CALIFORNIA

2024
NINO MIER GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY, US

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to present Motel California, our second solo exhibition by Los Angeles- based artist Roger Herman at the gallery. The presentation will be on view at our 380 Broadway location from May 1 to June 8, 2024.

Motel California features a series of recent ceramic vessels, large-scale paintings on canvas, and painted tile tables on which some of the ceramics rest. The front of the gallery features a series of Herman's Mescal cups, tiny ceramic pots modeled after jicara. Herman's characteristic unruliness saturates the works, which have been glazed and re-glazed, formed and unformed, cut, scraped, and scuffed throughout the intuitive process of their making. Across canvas and ceramic, Herman unites his objects and their expressionistic surfaces in a sustained meditation on color, texture, material, processes, and form.

A trained painter, Herman turned to ceramic as a new medium for his compositions in the late nineties. The ceramics are therefore paintings too, their surfaces as considered as those of his canvas works. Many of the ceramics, like his canvas paintings, present configurations of malformed color blocks— degraded, rectangular shapes rendered in "impossible" color schemes. Other ceramics reflect forms and themes found in genres as diverse as manga, still life, and memento mori.

Herman is inclined toward creating works that are arresting precisely because they embrace a deliberate crudeness. His hand-built works eschew more conventional ceramic practices with their asymmetrical forms, large voids, and useless protrusions. He will often scrape at the form, or add material to it, until it reaches an awkwardness or grittiness that makes the work aesthetically gripping. He also will often fire ceramics multiple times in his kiln, drawn to the unpredictable transformations of color during the glazing process. When a work is looking too perfect, too pristine and harmonious, Herman cheekily calls it "perfectly horrible." Then, he rectifies the situation.


NINO MIER GALLERY
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ROGER HERM
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ROGER HERMAN
MOTEL CALIFORNIA
Roger Herman Keramik
Roger Herman Keramik
Roger Herman Keramik
verizon











KERAMIK

2023
NINO MIER GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA, US

Herman is well known for his polyphonous orchestrations of color and form spanning ceramics, painting, and other mediums. Herman's vessels – the focus of this exhibition – emerge from his appreciation of imperfection and incompleteness. Each ceramic teems with energy produced by the tensions between virtuosity and crudeness, beauty and asymmetry, power and awkwardness.

Beginning his process with wheel-thrown clay forms that are stacked or cut, Herman's pots are often irregular, some including spontaneous voids or protrusions. Then, the artist paints vibrant, quickly applied, expressionistic compositions beneath glossy glazes that cultivate a haptic sensuality. The vessels – which range from small, handheld teacups to exceptionally tall or wide vases – change drastically as they are circumambulated. Paint drips, glazes crackle, and inlaid incisions groove across surfaces at irregular intervals. The kiln is Herman's maverick collaborator: each form manifests Herman's ceaseless experimentation with the possibilities of color, texture, material, process, and form.

From painterly abstraction to manga, ukiyo-e, erotica, memento mori, surrealism and parietal art, imagery and gestures are appropriated and re-worked on Herman's ceramic surfaces. Another important touchstone for the artist, Lucio Fontana's ceramics cultivate a psychedelic maximalism which Herman harnesses through his unique thematic and formal investments. Drawn to the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, Herman honors irregularity, roughness, and transformation as he works with clay and undergoes the firing and glazing processes.

At the Academy of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe, Herman earned a traditional education in painting. Until the late 90s, he primarily painted on canvas, influenced by the work of Richard Diebenkorn other painters from California, where he moved in 1977. Expressionistic, naïveish figuration and abstraction was the linchpin of Herman's practice until a student of his at UCLA taught him how to throw – an experience which proved foundational to his enduring investment in the ceramic medium.

An instinctual relationship to color and composition guides Herman's work, which expands into mediums such as paintings on canvas, drawings, books, and woodcut prints. For Keramik, Herman produced a series of hand-printed posters to accompany his suite of ceramics.













CERAMIC

2018
SORRY WE'RE CLOSED
BRUSSELS, BE

Roger Herman works intuitively with clay, but generally starts with wheel thrown forms that are stacked, cut, altered, and decorated. Often featuring bright underglaze colors contrasting with dark, glossy glazes, the pots range from small, handheld cup- or bowl-like pieces to massive vases, urn-like pots, and large platters. Herman also employs many drawing and painting techniques, including inlay, scraffito, wax resist, oxide wash, and combinations of underglaze and glaze. Not bound by one style, some pots are abstract color fields while others are completely covered in figurative drawing. Often fired and refired, the pots exude a considered casualness that is also open, honest, and exuberant.

Raw energy and an instinctual sensory relationship to colour and textures is immediately apparent through the bulk of his work, which spans from drawings to paintings, books to ceramics, t-shirts and woodcut prints. His wild blends of ad-hoc and quickly-dashed lines, shapes, opacities, smears layer together in awkward but satisfying compositions. Gestures are as boldly applied as covered up, allowing shapes to recede and reveal themselves simultaneously, in a true polyphony of style.

Images courtesy of Sorry We're Closed











Images courtesy of Carpenters Workshop Gallery



BLUMEN

2019
CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY, US

Los Angeles-based artist Roger Herman brings his painterly ceramic vessels and plates to New York for Blumen – a solo show at Carpenters Workshop Gallery. The exhibition is comprised of new ceramic vessels shown alongside a monumental installation of Herman's decorative plates.

Blumen showcases Roger Herman's practice over the last 40 years working at the nexus of art and design, featuring an array of his large hand-crafted ceramic vessels.

Herman comments: "I have a constant dialogue with me as a painter on canvas and a painter working on ceramics. Using the Vessel as canvas. The interesting part of making ceramics for me is that you can't control the process as much as with painting. In the ceramics the element of surprise and the unknown is important. Painting is control, ceramic for me is letting go of that control. The best things happen often by accident."


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LOS ANGELES TIMES
OCTOBER 2026
BY MARISSA GLUCK

CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY
FEBRUARY 2024

HYPERALLERGIC
JULY 2020
BY JENNIFER SAMET

HYPEBEAST
JULY 2020
BY KEITH ESTILER

LOS ANGELES TIMES
JANUARY 2016
BY LEAH OLLMAN

T MAGAZINE
MARCH 2011
BY ADAM FISHER

DENVER POST
JULY 2009
BY KYLE MACMILLIAN

ARTNET NEWS
JULY 2009
BY HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP

Los Angeles Times

OCTOBER 2026

He had an L.A. home and studio built for $150,000 in 1985. It's still a work of art

By Marissa Gluck
Photography by Kayla Bartkowski



- Artist Roger Herman's Solano Canyon home is a humble, art-filled "castle in the woods," built with architect Frederick Fisher as both a family home and a studio for large-scale paintings.
- Built on a tight budget in 1985, the plywood-clad house makes room for Herman's work and the paintings, sculptures and ceramics of friends and former students.
- That spirit of experimentation continues in Herman's paintings and ceramics, from oversize vessels to small mezcal cups, and in his latest exhibition in Hollywood.

Roger Herman may be the ultimate artist's artist. Herman, a former professor in UCLA's painting and drawing department and co-founder of the now-defunct Black Dragon Society gallery in Chinatown, lives with the work of his former students and friends crammed throughout his home.

Paintings, sculptures, ceramics and books line every available wall, shelf and tabletop. Los Angeles art world luminaries such as Raymond Pettibon, Ruby Neri and Adam Silverman are displayed alongside lesser-known artists beloved by Herman, 78, and his wife.

While the house is bursting with artwork that would make most museum curators envious, Herman's home is surprisingly humble, built on a tight budget from prosaic materials.



Roger Herman's home and studio in Solano Canyon.

Herman, a German transplant who has been in L.A. since 1977, is an artist whose vividly rendered paintings cemented him as one of the West Coast leaders of the '80s neo-Expressionist movement. His early gallerist, Larry Gagosian, promoted him as the L.A. counterpart to art-world superstars Jean-Michel Basquiat and David Salle. His unconventional ceramics, like his painting, tend to be massively scaled and edge closer to sculpture than functional objects.

Despite a pedigree that includes work in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Hammer Museum, Herman remains resolutely modest and insatiably curious. When Herman incorporated ceramics into his practice in 1998, he turned to one of his graduate students, Lisa Yu, to teach him. "She got me started and was so generous," he says. "She made me do 500 pots and bowls."

Herman's home embodies the same humility. Built in 1985 on a triangular lot abutting Elysian Park in Solano Canyon, Herman has spent the last four decades working and living in a house designed by his friend, architect Frederick Fisher of Frederick Fisher and Partners. Herman turned to Fisher, who was recently out of UCLA's graduate school and Frank Gehry's practice, when he wanted to build a house that could also accommodate a studio for his large-scale paintings.



Roger Herman's dog Willy walks through the living quarters of Herman's Solano Canyon home and studio.

Fisher says Herman requested a "castle in the woods," citing his background from the Black Forest region of Germany. Fisher designed a 5,000-square-foot studio and home that combines the aesthetics of a downtown artist's loft and the comforts of a single-family home in the working-class enclave that still offered inexpensive land. "It was a true collaboration," Fisher says.

With a tight budget, Fisher and Herman were able to build the home for just $150,000, or $30 per square foot, a price that was nearly unheard of even in the early 1980s. The unfussy, DIY aesthetic is immediately apparent, with an exterior clad entirely in plywood sheeting that has been painted and repainted several times over the decades. The original clear stain was later painted a light green, then a dark green, then blue and is now back to green. Floors and ceilings are also plywood.



Roger Herman added large bookshelves in his studio to display his ceramics and expansive library.

Steel casement windows and oversize doors used throughout the house are salvaged. Herman had begun salvaging parts before he even built the house, storing them in his studio loft in downtown L.A. until the time was right. “I had everything stored but I didn’t have a lot yet. I just had parts for a house. I wanted [it] as big as possible, of course, but I had no money. And Fred said we can figure it out,” Herman says.

The wedge-shaped footprint, built to the maximum allowable area, features a ground-level studio with 16-foot-high ceilings, clerestory windows and an overhead skylight to allow for natural light. Herman later added a wall to divide the studio space as well as custom shelving for his expansive library and ceramics.



Recessed skylights bring in natural light to view Roger Herman’s work.



Roger Herman holds a colorful ceramic piece.

On the second floor, a large, open room with a 12-foot-high ceiling serves as the communal living, dining and kitchen area. The entrance to the loft space is flanked by colorful, translucent plastic strips, allowing light and people to easily pass through. A wood-burning cast-iron stove serves as both fireplace and heater in the center of the living space. Down the book-lined hallway is an office, guest room and bathroom. A patio divides the two halves, providing access to the outdoors and opportunities to bring more light into both wings of the house. A third floor comprises the master bedroom, surrounded by three decks.

Herman worked with Fisher again to add a second building to the complex in 2003. Needing space to host gallerists, curators and visitors that felt more finished than his original studio, Herman asked Fisher to design a space to showcase his art, using many of the same principles as the original house.



Roger Herman uses a wheel to create the base, then builds the vessel by hand.

There is still a large ground-floor studio but in a more refined finish. Downstairs is a small, cinderblock-enclosed ceramics studio where Herman builds his oversize vessels, starting on a wheel and then hand-building the rest of the vases before firing them in his own kiln. Upstairs is the office and studio of his wife, photographer Eika Aoshima. A lush cactus garden is bordered by Elysian Park, completing Fisher's vision of the castle in the woods, but done in Southern California's vernacular.

Herman's latest exhibition at Carpenters in Hollywood, "California Poppies," embraces the same logic of experimentation and assemblage found in his home. (The show, which opened in June, runs through Saturday.) His paintings and ceramics are layered and collage-like, driven by instinct rather than by a predestined end point. Herman enjoys the capriciousness of the kiln, never knowing quite what will emerge from it.



The lack of predictability is exactly what drew Herman to ceramics in the first place. "When I make a painting, I have control of the paint and the brushstroke and image," Herman says. "The nice thing about ceramics is you have to let it go. None of these expectations come out the way you want. It's a good lesson." The result is vibrant vases that are polished and imperfect.

Herman also creates ceramic tile-topped tables that are modular. Each tile is the same size, but for most of the tables, the abstraction of the design means collectors can choose how they are arranged.

"You can play with the tiles," says Damien Anger, senior sales associate at Carpenters. "It's very easy, and you can create your own composition." On tabletops with less abstract design, such as one with a skull depicted, differences in glazing and firing mean there are variations in the hue and colors. The individual ceramic tiles create a complete composition but are also subject to the vicissitudes of the kiln.

While Herman was once known only for his massive canvases, today he has learned to appreciate the diminutive in his life and his work. Formerly the proud owner of three Great Danes, Herman now spends about two hours a day at the dog park to tire out his rescued Jack Russell mix, Willy.

Citing the influence of Italian painter Giorgio Morandi, who created humble still lifes of ceramics and flowers (“Those tiny paintings have a whole universe in them,” says Herman), he recently started making smaller mezcal cups and ceramic tomato graters. “Mezcal cups take as much work as the vases,” Herman says, laughing. He is delighted he can produce functional objects as well as massive paintings.



Roger Herman holds a ball while playing with his dog, Willy.

While Herman’s house is large by most standards, it personifies that same lack of ostentation. Surrounded by objects and art made by friends, Herman is happy to host and entertain them in his home. It’s not a surprising inclination for someone who spent so much of his life teaching generations of Los Angeles artists.

“Roger has been a believer in community,” says Fisher. “He’s always been about making and supporting a community of creative people.”

CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY

FEBRUARY 2024

Roger Herman
FROM CALIFORNIA WITH LOVE



"Roger Herman: From California With Love" (2024) at Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London

Featuring the latest works by Los Angeles-based multidisciplinary artist Roger Herman, this new exhibition explores the multifaceted approach of Herman throughout his artistic practice, and how he seamlessly intertwines ceramics and painting to unveil an assemblage of colour, texture, material, processes and form.

At the core of the exhibition are fifteen large, hand-crafted ceramics, sculpted from wheel-thrown clay. These works transcend traditional ceramic design techniques with their irregular shapes, spontaneous voids and protrusions which are ignited by Herman's fascination with the transformative power of colour during the glazing process – a theme he's passionately explored since the late-1990s. Evoking a unique and unpredictable painterly expression that celebrates imperfection, spontaneity and intuition, each piece is marked by an approach that treats the clay as a blank canvas, allowing brush strokes, dashes and lines to build texture and colour in ways not foreseen.

Complementing the ceramics are six large-scale canvases that echo the gestural and spontaneous vibrancy found in their ceramic counterparts. These paintings, alongside the ceramics, share a cohesive space within the gallery, illustrating Herman's instinctive artistic methods developed through his experimental work with clay, kilns and glazes.

Adorning one wall of the gallery are a collection of Herman's Mescal cups, tiny ceramic pots modelled after a jicara – a cup made from a half-dried fruit and used to drink mezcal tequila. The glazing on the pots emulates the same texture and technique seen in his larger ceramic works and paintings.

Herman, who was born in Germany and is now based in LA, is a painter and ceramicist, recognized as the West Coast parallel of the eighties neo-Expressionist movement. With works ranging from figurative to abstract, Herman's journey reflects a commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional mediums, evident in the unpredictable and experimental nature of his works. His focus on colour and glazing processes, as well as his dedication to embracing imperfections, resonates with broader movements in contemporary art that challenge conventional norms. As a teacher at UCLA, Herman has been a prominent figure in the artistic community, with his work featured in galleries worldwide and held in prestigious collections such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).



"Roger Herman: From California With Love" (2024) at Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London

HYPERALLERGIC

JULY 2020

Beer With a Painter: Roger Herman

“Struggle is okay, but how much struggle does one want?”

By Jennifer Stamet



Roger Herman, “Untitled (Building)” (1987), oil on canvas, 120 x 72 inches (all images courtesy the artist)

It is clear that a wry way of looking at the world — and at his own work — is the norm for Roger Herman, whom I met (pre-pandemic) at his home and studio in the Solano Canyon neighborhood of Los Angeles. For decades, he has been a central member of the LA art community, and an influential teacher to generations of students in the painting department of the University of California, Los Angeles.

He is also warm and gracious. At one point in our conversation, he suddenly stops talking to ask if I’m getting hungry. He then sets out a table full of perfect snacks — slices of papaya with lemon, soft cheese, locally baked olive bread, and European butter.

Herman’s work bears the pleasant contradictions of his personality: there’s a bad-boy coolness to some of his early, massively scaled paintings, which are derived from art historical sources or photographs of interiors and facades of seemingly unpopulated buildings. But he also approaches more intimate media — painted books, posters, and works on paper — with palpable curiosity and whole-hearted color. His ceramic vessels, which he began making in the 2000s, are playful and sensual — and not simply because they are often painted with over-the-top erotic imagery.

He lives with his wife, photographer Eika Aoshima, in a home that he helped to design and build in the 1980s, a dramatic modernist structure with clean lines and plywood floors, incorporating indoor and outdoor passageways

and working spaces. Nestled in a lush garden, a work table in a circular stone patio is laden with T-shirts painted with colorful skulls and grid forms as they dry in the sunlight. His indoor studio contains a mix of older paintings, paintings-in-progress, and shelving built to hold hundreds of his ceramics. Stacks and shelves full of books, paintings, and ceramics by his friends, colleagues, and students, collected over the years, are spread throughout the living spaces.

Jennifer Samet: Can you tell me about your background, growing up in Germany, and how you started making art?
Roger Herman: I am from Saarbrücken, Germany, which is on the French border. I have both worlds in me. I spoke French and went to a French school. But when I started to live in the States, I became German. You look for an identity somewhere.

When I was 10, my father died. My mother died when I was 19. I grew up a little bit under the tutelage of my uncle. He was a lawyer, and he said, "You should be a lawyer; it's great." So I studied law and politics for three years or so. I would tell him, "Heinz, I would really love to be an artist." I used to build things, and I painted. He would hand me a piece of paper and say, "Just draw me a poodle."

Well, I couldn't draw a poodle. It's not so easy. I have no talent whatsoever in that way. I was so humiliated. It took forever, but eventually I failed miserably in law school. In Germany, the good thing is that universities are free. I studied in law school for four years, then took a year off, and then spent five years studying art. I went to art school when I was already 26, and I was about 30 or 31 when I finished.

I always had doubts, and I was always winging it. I would try different things out. I'm also very influenced by art history, and I come from a real painter's tradition: I went to art school at the Academy of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe, with really conservative painters. Georg Baselitz and Marcus Lüpertz taught there. In some ways, it wasn't a good choice for me, and I wanted to go to the Düsseldorf Art Academy. I was so impressed by artists like Sigmar Polke and Jörg Immendorff. I would dare to do funny things and my teachers would say, "You are not in Düsseldorf."

Karlsruhe was a very traditional school, and it has stayed in me — this kind of basic painting, where I am looking for an essence that's really not there anymore. However, it's very traditional to look for it. What is left if that essence is not there? Irony? I appreciated that quality in an artist like Martin Kippenberger. But his art is related to his personality. When my students try to imitate Kippenberger, I say, "It looks easy, but there is a complex, difficult personality at work." He was very smart and witty, and there was a drive that came from a totally cynical place.

When I came to the United States, I loved Clyfford Still; I loved de Kooning. I loved all the Abstract Expressionists. But I never thought that was a valid path for me either. That machismo is not really in me. I was doubtful of it. However, I also never went the other way — into the ironic.

JS: What led you to move to California?
RH: My former girlfriend, Susan Wood, who is the mother of our daughter Jessika, is from the Bay Area. I came to visit while I was still in art school. Then I applied for a DAAD grant to study abroad. I really went with the wind, thinking how I loved San Francisco because it looked like Europe. I knew the art of Richard Diebenkorn and David Park. That was the basis of my application. I came to San Francisco, but it turned out Diebenkorn was living in Los Angeles and David Park was dead and I was just stuck with the Funk artists, who I never understood: like William Wiley and Roy De Forest.

I thought San Francisco was the Beatniks, the Hells Angels, the Black Panther political movement. But when I was there, it was just a bunch of hippies smoking pot. I lived in a commune, and I became a punk, because I didn't want to be part of Berkeley.

From 1977 to 1981, I lived in Berkeley and Oakland. We had a little thing going with artist-run spaces like A.R.E., Jetwave, Valencia Tool and Die, and The A-Hole Gallery. They were music and performance-oriented. It was like a fishbowl; we would all go around and meet up in those spaces.

JS: Did this disillusionment with San Francisco lead you to move to Los Angeles?
RH: Yes, Los Angeles felt more open to the world compared to the insular nature of San Francisco. I was excited because I had no expectations, and found there was a lot to discover. San Francisco is beautiful, but Los Angeles has no real landmarks, and everything looks the same at first. But it's a city to discover, and that's what made it so exciting for outsiders. I also found more artists in Los Angeles who interested me: Mike Kelley, Raymond

Pettibon, The Kipper Kids, and so many others. We were all living downtown and were friends.

LA has a certain freedom, and I love it. Where I come from in Germany, there is a control — an almost corporate-feeling tribe that tells you what to do: how to clean your house and what kind of clothes to wear. It's in you. You come here, and feel so relieved of all that criticism.
Los Angeles is also very ahistorical. Everything is here for 30 years and then it is gone. There is nothing permanent. Europeans tend to be very historical thinkers; we have this burden of history.

JS: I'm curious about the early work and your decision to make very large-scale paintings. Sometimes you used art historical works that were originally small, like Van Gogh's paintings of shoes, as your starting-point and scaled them up massively in your interpretation. Why do you think you were making big paintings?
RH: Well, I have this one stupid idea: I felt that people don't look at a Velasquez painting or a Manet painting and understand how beautifully they are made. So I make it really big so you really see how good it is.

But the main reason was that when I was living in San Francisco, my friends were in punk bands, like the Dead Kennedys, and I painted a few stage sets for their concerts. The first Van Gogh heads I made were for a concert. I was jealous of musicians who had a stage where they could make a big splash. I wanted to make a splash.

Also, the interest in large scale goes back to my school in Karlsruhe where artists like Lüpertz and Baselitz were making big paintings. Anselm Kiefer was basically putting painting back on the map.

It was always hard for me to come up with ideas about what to paint. When I came to the US, there was this feeling of being independent, so that I could reinvent art history. I started to paint huge heads, mountains like Cézanne, oceans. I painted my mother from old photographs. They were 10 feet tall and very yellow and monochromatic. I showed them here and they were received as if I was painting clichés as a critique of Expressionism. It's true I painted clichés, but it was actually more out of naiveté.

JS: Did you associate yourself with Neo-Expressionism? What led you to painting the Classrooms and Buildings series?
RH: To a point, but the problem is that Neo-Expressionism is difficult to define. It was always a misnomer. There were so many different interpretations and strands in Italy, Cologne, Berlin, and the United States.

I started to paint the interiors, classrooms, and buildings from photographs, using a slide projector. I painted in



"Roger Herman: A Collection of Unique Ceramics and Paintings" (2019) at Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London

the dark using only yellow and black. It made me less self-conscious; it makes your line unselfconscious. David Hockney wrote about this phenomenon, claiming that Ingres used a projector to make these incredibly fluid drawings. When you use a projector, you are not involved in the making of an image, in terms of shape and form. Everything is the same: ear, mouth, nose, chin. There is no ego involved.

I had hundreds of source photographs of interiors and buildings, but only a couple of them worked for paintings. Even though I used the same image repeatedly, I found that each painting would be different. Each painting could become both abstract and figurative; meaningful and completely meaningless.

This was the response, as well: some people would say they looked like desolate buildings, and others would say they were like Monet's Rouen Cathedral paintings. Some were dry; some were wet; some were flat, but they also had a horizon. So they fulfilled everything that I ever wanted to do in a painting. And I couldn't do any other paintings for many years.

Then I had a mid-life crisis around 1988-89. I got an apartment in New York on 14th Street and attempted to be bicoastal. I started to paint abstractions related to allover patterns and forms derived from Arshile Gorky, early Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, or doodles like George Condo's painterly abstraction. They were about an inconsequential form of abstraction. Some of them were 45-feet long. At first, the work felt like a kind of liberation. But I stopped doing them because eventually they seemed decorative.

JS: Can you tell me about the Black Dragon Society, the gallery you started, where you showed many of your students from UCLA?
RH: Yes, I started a gallery with Hubert Schmalix and Chris Sievernich. There was a street in Chinatown — Chung King Road — which was all souvenir shops, and at the time, many of them would rent for about $500 for a nice 800-square-foot space. I decided we should just open a space — mostly to show our students.

We cleaned it up; we thought it should be a hangout place. We showed students like Nick Lowe, Ry Rocklin, Hannah Greely, Jonas Wood. At first I thought it was great — that we were doing something good. The work was priced around $300-$400. But it was a time when everybody wanted young, fresh artists. We hired Parker Jones as the director and he became the motor for the gallery. He went to art fairs and we became pretty well known, and then the prices went crazy. We got two spaces. It went way over our head. People started paying $40,000 for a Nick Lowe painting. It became this feeding frenzy and I thought, "This is not good."

I realize galleries have to grow, but I didn't want to grow. I wanted to have my little thing and go in on Saturdays and do a favor for someone. So we closed it, and it was perfect; it was the right time to close. Even now, these kids tell me they still miss it. However, I think it was a little bit of a problem to show such young artists, because you can stunt their development.

JS: After you stopped making the big abstractions, what kind of work did you start doing? How did you start making the ceramics?
RH: I envy artists who have something that really lasts forever. I love Morandi, but I'm not Morandi. I'm so impatient and nervous. Morandi lived with his three sisters alone in this little house. You can't separate the temperament from the work. I am always curious about things, but I am also conservative. I fall back on art history. So after I did the big-doodle theatrical works, I went back to smaller figurative paintings.

Then I started to make ceramics. I had a graduate student, Lisa Yu, who is Taiwanese. She came into UCLA as a potter, and she made the most exquisite pots. She was great, but she got really conflicted because of all the conceptual stuff going on, and started to lose her footing. I asked her if she would teach me how to make the pots. I became her student. She took it very seriously, and had me make 500 pots. It was very rewarding. I started painting on them. I enjoyed it, and people responded to it. I felt I had nothing to gain and nothing to lose: starting something that I hadn't conceived as part of the trajectory of being a painter.

It resonated, and it also felt democratic. With ceramic, you can just have a sale of your work. There is more openness. You have to go to places to fire the work and you end up asking people, "How do you do that? What kind of clay did you use?"

There are so many unpredictable elements with ceramic. It humbles you. I'm a control freak, and I can't control it. I have to sort of say, "each one is good" and accept all the bad things. I am always surprised. When you put them in a kiln, you don't really know what they are going to look like in the end. Even the shapes can be a surprise. I

cannot repeat them because I don't really know how I made them. But the worst experience I had was when I wrote down the formula and I made 30 small pots. I planned them and they came out looking terribly; they looked regular and ordinary.

JS: Can you tell me about the incredible range of imagery you use in your paintings on the ceramics, like Japanese Manga drawing?
RH: With the ceramics, I don't really care what I steal from. I'm not self-conscious. I have stashes of referent pictures: images of birds and snakes, medieval drawings by Hans Baldung Grien and Durer. I use everything. But with my paintings, I don't do that. It's like I'm a soldier out there making oil paintings — although now I use Flashe.

JS: I noticed with the recent work in the studio you are painting on paper, which is then mounted on linen. Why do you paint on paper?
RH: I can mess up a piece of paper, but a canvas is precious and beautiful in itself. When I built this house and studio, it was perfect. I was too intimidated to paint downstairs on the plywood floor, so I painted in the garage. I get intimidated sometimes by the canvas. Working on paper is a psychological shortcut to be messy and loose. I've been painting on T-shirts for that reason. It gives me permission to be totally stupid. It is like trying to subvert myself.

How can you achieve a certain honesty or authenticity as a professional artist? I felt my best painting was done when I was just starting and making the "underpainting." That was when I was most free and honest — when I had no intention, and wasn't signaling a purpose.

JS: You said that you've only recently returned to painting, after focusing on the ceramics. What do you think led you back into painting?
RH: Well, you feel that is your job. I haven't quit. I don't know if that's because I'm stupid or because I'm stubborn. I love to make the ceramics. I'm trying to figure out how to make paintings with the same attitude. Perhaps it is impossible to reach that. However, I love painting. Sometimes I love other people's paintings more than mine.

With painting I had no fun for many years. It was a struggle. Struggle is okay, too, but how much struggle does one want? I thought maybe it was because I was teaching. It's like being a therapist. You deal with this person and that person, but at the end you have to let go of that. It leaves a trace in you. I think about the somewhat unknown Belgian artist, Bram van Velde, and the book Conversations with Bram van Velde and Samuel Beckett. Van Welde lived in Paris, and made very strange paintings. He said, "The more you know, the less you are."



Roger Herman, "Van Gogh's Shoes" (1984), woodcut, 96 x 96 inches

HYPEBEAST

JULY 2020

Carpenters Workshop Gallery Spotlights Roger Herman's Expressive Ceramics

Hand-painted figurations on a variety of vessels.

By Keith Estiler



Carpenters Workshop Gallery

Carpenters Workshop Gallery just launched an online viewing room featuring vivid ceramic works by LA-based artist Roger Herman. Channeling the loose and abstract styles found in the neoexpressionist movement, Herman maintains an intuitive approach to developing paintings and sculptures that feature a wide range of hand-painted subjects including skulls, chairs, shapes, interiors, and more.

Herman started painting in the mid 1980s, exploring a broad range of styles. "'It is about painting, not about subject matter. I don't have a narrative,' Herman says about his work. 'The subject is always painting, which is why there is a repetition always— like Morandi. I'm trying to go somewhere I'm not comfortable," he said in a statement.

The artist transitioned into creating clay works in the late 1990s, carrying his expressive, figurative style on canvas portrayals to three-dimensional pieces such as wonkily-formed pots depicting quickly dashed lines to visuals inspired by Japanese erotic art. "I have a constant dialogue with me as a painter on canvas and a painter working on ceramics. Using the Vessel as canvas," he said. "The interesting part of making ceramics for me is that you can't control the process as much as with painting. "

Los Angeles Times

JANUARY 2016

Critic's Choice: Roger Herman ceramics: bold, bawdy and ... is that a little bondage sketched on there?

By Leah Ollman

Roger Herman's invigorating show at Richard Telles Fine Art in Los Angeles lends new meaning to the phrase, "bull in a china shop." Herman is the brash and bulky bull here, the force of disorder. He also happens to be the one making the china.

More than 200 ceramic pieces by the L.A. stalwart fill two tall, open shelving units in the main gallery, plus a long, low bench between them and a table in the entry space. Much of the work dates from 2015, but some pieces go back a decade or more. They are not arranged chronologically, but rather grouped according to familial, formal affinities -- height, shape, imagery, palette. Their impact, en masse, is formidable.

Herman made these sculptural vessels concurrent with his two-dimensional works on paper and canvas. Those paintings, drawings and prints, gestural explorations of the humble and the grand, continually shift along the fluid continuum of figuration and abstraction. They feature architectural facades, craggy mountains, flowers and skulls. Brooding at times, buoyant at others, they feel consumed by pressing issues of mortality.

The ceramic works draw from a similar pool of preoccupations -- the body, memory, death and life in all of its urgent physicality. They are, essentially, paintings and drawings on shaped surfaces. A series of broad, deep bowls, roughly 2 feet in diameter, roils with erotic energy. Herman has incised their surfaces with scratchy, pictographic sketches of rumps and breasts, splayed thighs and gaping crotches. In earthy browns, with occasional swipes of color, the bowls are raw, rustic feasts. They distantly echo the declamatory insistence of ancient cave paintings, the marks as indelible records: "I was here. This is what we do."

The sexual, sensual body is all in Herman's ceramic sculptures. Thick-waisted, slump-shouldered, clumsy, hefty, fecund and only occasionally lithe, his vessels are eminently anthropomorphizable. Their walls are sturdy, sometimes slit open and windowed. The revelry upon their surfaces runs from bawdy to grim. On one piece, an inky stream spews from the rear of a naked, bent-over woman. On another, a male figure hangs upside-down from his bound feet. Punishment or bondage play? Hard to tell. Alluring eyes on lovely faces also abound. Birds and snakes show up from time to time, and something resembling a donkey. Dark myths are being played out here, and also ordinary life. Herman's work reminds us of how much they have in common.

The figural work tends toward a palette of sand, soil, mustard, eggshell and rust. Another aspect of Herman's work is glazed in vibrant color -- tangerine, pale blue, lipstick red, gold. These vessels, too, orient toward the sensual. They feel unabashed, a little reckless, but notes of grace arise throughout: a woman's profile with a dark, knowing eye appears on an otherwise sloppy cylinder; the skin of a pudgy jug erupts in delicate, crackly chips. The stripes and dots enlivening these pieces nod to early modernist abstraction, or maybe the Pattern and Decoration movement. Like the figurative works, these too assert themselves with fearless, boisterous zest. All in all, exhilarating.

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

MARCH 2011

The Last Boho Standing

By Adam Fisher



BOLD STROKES — Roger Herman, the godfather of the Los Angeles art scene and beyond, in his Solano Canyon studio. Photographs by Paul Jasmin. Fashion editor: Andreas Kokkino.

Ceramics is the Rodney Dangerfield of the art world: the medium gets no respect. So why is there such a glittering crowd at the Acme gallery on Wilshire Boulevard for the opening of “Los Angeles Museum of Ceramic Art”? The women are model-y swans, the men are rugged and fashionable, and this being L.A., there’s even the requisite celebrity — John C. Reilly — mingling among the crowd. And everywhere, just everywhere, are the young art stars that twinkle in L.A.’s firmament. They’re mostly painters, and they’ve been drawn here by the gravitational pull of an artist that most outsiders have never heard of: Roger Herman.

He co-curated the show, contributed much of the work, designed and printed a pair of posters, and is now tending bar, a spot that gives him a chance to spend a little time with everyone. The artist Cyril Kuhn is one of those who came to pay his respects: “Every painter in the last 30 years who has come out of Los Angeles owes a debt to him,” he says. “Every few years the New York art world gets bored of itself and rediscovers us. They descend like flies, pumping him for the names of the hot new artists in L.A.” Kuhn pauses, then adds, “They completely forget about the old master.”

Herman was once an art star, too. Born and educated in Germany, he moved to California in 1977 and started churning out canvases of Schwarzeneggerian proportions. Painted with a loose, colorful hand, they managed to be simultaneously expressive and conceptual, with traces of Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer, and Herman was recognized as the West Coast wing of the ’80s neo-Expressionist movement. Gagosian snapped him up and positioned him as the California counterpart to David Salle and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In the late ’80s he

teamed up with the performance artist Chris Burden and the sculptor Charles Ray to transform U.C.L.A. from a stuffy backwater into the hottest art school in the country. This last decade he pulled another rabbit out of the hat by putting L.A.'s Chinatown on the map with the opening of the Black Dragon Society, a gallery-cum-clubhouse tucked into an anonymous storefront on Chung King Road.

"We started out selling $100 paintings," says Herman, showing me financial statements that record annual gross sales of $1.1 million by 2008. "It got to be just obscene, really," he adds, explaining why he closed the gallery at the height of the art bubble ("a feeding frenzy"). Herman is a throwback to a time when being a painter was tantamount to taking a vow of poverty, when artists lived in ghettos and bohemia was more than just a brand of cheap Mexican beer.

Herman, in fact, still lives in the ghetto he moved into in 1986: a poor Mexican-Chinese immigrant neighborhood near downtown called Solano Canyon. The walls of his giant warehouse studio are covered with evidence of his central place in the West Coast art world. The living area is chockablock with paintings from colleagues — George Condo, Larry Poons — and grateful alumni of the Black Dragon Society: Jasmine Little, Gustavo Herrera, Nick Lowe. Near the bathroom are a dozen pen-and-ink drawings by the artist Raymond Pettibon, whose brother founded the hardcore band Black Flag. (In his younger days Herman was active in the California punk scene and was married to Tamra Davis, the film director.) In the garden is a sculpture by Urs Fischer.

Herman and his third wife, the celebrity photographer Eika Aoshima, share neighboring houses in a Frida Kahlo-Diego Rivera setup. Herman's house is like him — chaotic, improvised, intellectual (the second floor is literally buckling under the weight of his book collection) — while Aoshima keeps her spaces more orderly. Even her storage area is a spare study in minimalism: it's filled, floor to ceiling with cabinets packed with meticulously archived photographs of everyone from Angelina Jolie to Van Halen. Both houses were designed by Frederick Fisher, an architect known for his arty civic spaces, including MoMA P.S. 1 in Queens.

The compound is the site of frequent dinner parties and sits at the center of an emerging Solano Canyon scene: Urs Fischer and Cyril Kuhn share the house down the street; the garden designer Judy Kameon and the artist Erik Otsea have settled across the way; the local art impresarios Miguel Nelson and Sherry Walsh host their semiregular "Secret Restaurant" at their place nearby. And Al Renner, a community garden activist and fixture in L.A.'s slow food scene, tends to his local four-acre farm. "I love it," Herman says. "It's like a little village, hidden right in the heart of downtown. And it's not gentrified yet, thank God."

Herman can walk from where he lives to Chinatown, but he rarely visits anymore. "This is the old Black Dragon space," he says, moodily showing me around the new Jancar Gallery, a denuded white cube. "I hate what they've done to it," he whispers. "It was really just our clubhouse back then — we never had a girl behind a desk."

We're here on Sunday evening, the day after the pottery show at Acme, for an opening of Herman's new work: big, muscular, neon-hued takes on the castle, the conquistador, the nude. The show looks good, but Herman is not happy with it. "I'm sick of openings," he says, bailing out in the middle and retreating to a dive bar. His many young friends and admirers follow, gather round, banter, buy him a Corona. The camaraderie does Herman a world of good. He tells a joke: "Why did the conceptual artist decide to make a painting?" he asks, perking up. "He thought it would be a good idea."

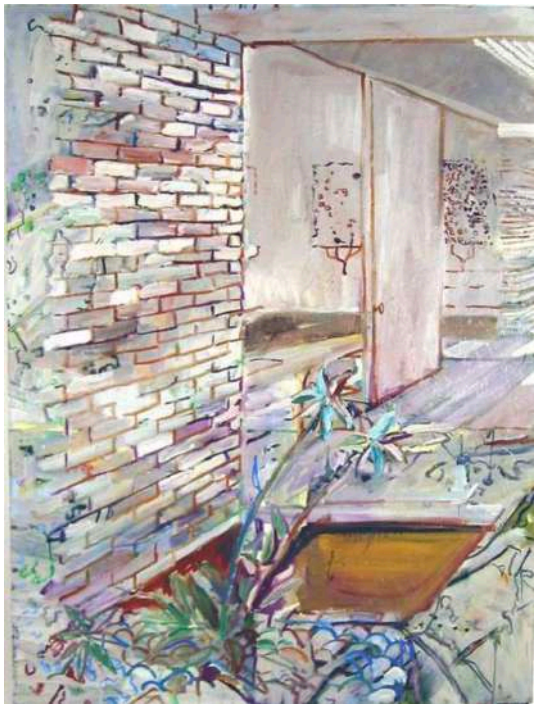
Everybody laughs right along with him.

THE DENVER POST

JULY 2009

Solo show spotlights Roger Herman's steadfast talent

By Kyle Macmillian



More than 20 works by German born-artist Roger Herman are showcased through July 18 in a solo exhibition at the Steele Gallery (left). Among them (far left) are "Plant and Bungalow" (2003), oil on canvas, 80 by 60 inches, and three of his large- scale woodcuts (below).

While Roger Herman has enjoyed his share of national and even international success, he has not achieved the art-world star status of some of his peers.This is due, at least in part, to the German-born artist's steadfast avoidance of fads, including the current obsessions with narrative and appropriation.

But as a solo exhibition at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design makes clear, that independentmindedness is exactly what gives Herman's art its appeal.

More than anything else, he is drawn to the act of painting, the sheer exhilaration of putting brush to canvas and manipulating the basic elements of form, line, color, etc.

The texture and gesturalism of his expressionist paint-handling enliven and embolden two of the exhibition's highlights — 7-by-12-foot paintings, both simply titled "Poppies."

Each of these large-scale pieces thrusts viewers into a vibrant cacophony of oversized leaves and blooms, rendered in bright, non-objective colors and set against a white field that seems to push the imagery forward.

There is a clear sense with Herman that the process of painting is far more important than what he paints. He gives his works rudimentary titles, which seem to be less titles in any meaningful sense and more just a necessary way to identify his pieces.

His subject matter is largely happenstance, perhaps a photo he comes across in a magazine. These almost random images serve simply as a starting point, a kind of stage on which he can enact his paintings.

Once he picks one of these images, he often tends to return to it almost obsessively, as he has done in his "Building" series, which has three examples on view in this exhibition. In these pieces, he has repeatedly rendered the same facade of a generic, modernist building with variations in color and certain other details.

RMCAD's Steele Gallery has two parallel rooms on opposite sides of an auditorium. For this exhibition, one is devoted to Herman's paintings and the other to his large-scale woodcuts, telegraphing the equivalent importance these two media hold in the artist's works.

These prints, with their simple, direct depictions of such subjects as a mountain, ship or floral arrangement, are rendered in bold, almost strident colors with a deliberate rough quality.

A striking example is "Tank," an imposing 5-by-9-foot depiction of a tank set against a patterned background.

Born in Germany in 1947, Herman came to San Francisco in 1976 on a fellowship from the German Academic Exchange Service and decided to remain in this country. In 1981, he moved to Los Angeles, where he has been a member of the art faculty at the University of California at Los Angeles since 1985.

Herman is regularly featured in exhibitions across the country and abroad. His work is included in the collections of such institutions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

Since her appointment in 2007, director Cortney Stell has strived to raise the ambition of the gallery's offerings, and this exhibition is the latest example of her efforts.

artnet® news

JULY 2009

DIRTY LITTLE POTS

By Hunter Drohojowska-Phlip



Roger Herman's pots installed at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2005

In an art world saturated with youthful promise, it is easy to lose sight of artists with a longer career trajectory. One artist who has pushed his work in ever-new directions is Roger Herman, whose "dirty little pots" were the subject of a brilliant exhibition this summer at the Santa Monica Museum of Art.
Herman was one of Los Angeles' hot young artists in the 1980s. Now he is chair of the department of painting at the city's hottest art school, UCLA, where he is surrounded by bright young things with their own agendas for success.

Herman has been rightly lauded over the years for monumental oil paintings and woodcuts that employ the expressionist line and gesture but are dedicated to coolly intellectual subject matter. Raised in the Alsace Lorraine region of Karlsruhe with its often shifting national allegiances, Herman has drawn from diverse sources in his work, painting from iconic art historical images like van Gogh's boots or photographs from newspapers and magazines. One exhibition included serial paintings in the expressionist style of the same mundane modern apartment block. By amalgamating the overview of Conceptual art with the expressionist language of painting, his work was and is considerably more sophisticated than that of many other who entered the limelight in the '80s.

Artists need to keep moving, reinventing and reexamining. A few years ago, Herman turned to ceramics. Like any number of painters before him -- Picasso, de Kooning –-- Herman found it refreshing to work in three-dimensions. He also knew of the late, great West Coast sculptor Peter Voulkos, who began translating Abstract-Expressionist ideas into clay in the late '50s.

After learning to throw pots, Herman did not attempt to craft the perfect bowl. Instead, he adopted the Zen notion of making ceramics of intentionally flawed and rustic appearance. Slightly off-kilter, mostly glazed in neutral creams and browns, they range in size from teacup to mixing bowl. Herman paints the rough clay surfaces with scenes of naked women and men in enough different positions to challenge the Kama Sutra. The frankly sexual drawing of Egon Schiele meets shun-ga, erotic prints such as those made by Hokusai. Thus are the influences from West and East melded in this collection of naughty bowls and cylindrical vases that are much more about form than function. Herman is no stranger to erotica. There are large paintings of nudes in his past based on photographs and executed in a loose but dark line. The translation of this interest to vessels, of themselves heavy on the distaff symbolism, is brazen and compelling.

With a studied informality, the drawings of women with legs in the air, or splayed at the hips, or bent over with their bottoms raised are rendered with a crude spontaneity in keeping with the subject matter. The men appear to be less acrobatic. The human skull also makes an appearance but in the manner of a simple Zen line drawing. The small show at the Santa Monica Museum, which was on view June 11-closed Aug. 13, 2005, was more like a peep show than a porn film. One could not see very clearly what was taking place as limbs wrapped around the natural curves of the bowl or disappeared under a swath of dark glaze. Of course, that made them more titillating and one found oneself looking more closely. Peering. What IS she doing with that enormous. . . ? Oh, you get the picture.

Apart from a few individual vitrines, Herman arranged the pots in all their various sizes, shapes and hues on a single, long table. The erotic promise of the surface drawing was compromised since one could not see each piece in three dimensions. This decision drew some complaints, but Herman has always been willing to confound the viewer's desires. His expressionist-style paintings do not emote; his erotica offers no release. He is a big tease -- but that only makes the art so much more compelling.

With "in your face" art having become something of a pathetic cliché, it is a pleasure to see a body of work operating simultaneously on so many levels of contemplation. Herman's art has an easy familiarity with art history, an awareness of the viewer, a highly controlled presentation and a sense of esthetic adventure. That sort of talent and confidence only comes with maturity and experience.



CURRICULUM VITAE

ROGER HERMAN

b. 1947, Saarbrücken, DE
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, US

EDUCATION

1976 MFA, Akademie der Kuenste, Karlsruhe, DE

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026 *Ceramic Vessels & Mountains*, Corner Shop, Sausalito Center for the Arts, CA, US
Rallador, Galeria Mascota, Mexico City, MX
California Poppies, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Los Angeles, US

2024 Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US (forthcoming)
From California With Love, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London, UK

2023 *New Paintings,* South Willard, Los Angeles, CA, US
Keramik, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2021 *Roger Herman,* Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE
Galeria Mascota, Mexico City, MX
Keramik, Galerie Lefebvre et Fils, Paris, FR
Roger Herman: Tables and the Ocean, South Willard, Los Angeles, CA, US

2020 *My French Paintings*, Praz Delavallade, Los Angeles, CA, US

2019 *Blumen*, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, New York, NY, US
A Collection of Unique Ceramics and Paintings, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London, UK

2018 Thomas Hunter Space, Hunter College, New York, NY, US
Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY, US
Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

2017 Feuer/Mesler Gallery, New York, NY, US
Galerie Lefebvre et Fils, Paris, FR

2016 Marc Jancou, Gestaad, CH
Galerie Lefebvre et Fils, Paris, FR
Richard Telles, Fine Arts, Los Angeles, CA, US

2015 Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London, UK
Paintings and Woodcuts from the 80's, West Palm Beach, FL, US

2014 ACME Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
South Willard, Los Angeles, CA, US

2012 Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

2010 George Lawson Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US

2009 Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA, US
Paintings of the 80's, Jancar Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
HEATH Ceramics Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
RMCAD Philip J. Steele Gallery, Denver, CO, US

2008 Galerie Gordon, Pym and Fils, Paris, FR

2006 INMO Gallery, Los Angeles, CA Mitsubishi Gallery, Tokyo, JP

2005 Guggenheim Gallery at Chapman University, Orange, CA, US
Santa Monica Museum, Project Room, Santa Monica, CA, US
Galerie Gordon, Pym and Fils, Paris, FR

2004 Atelier Richard Tullis, Santa Barbara, CA, US
Galerie Schmidt/Goldener Engel, Hall/Innsbruck, AT

2003 Black Dragon Society, Los Angeles, CA, US

2002 Galerie Peter Reich, Vienna, AT

2001 Susanne Vielmetter Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US
Black Dragon Society, Los Angeles, CA, US

2000 Susanne Vielmetter Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US

1999 Ursula Krinzinger Galerie, Vienna, AT

1998 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1997 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1996 Lawing Gallery, Houston, TX, US
Ace Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA, US

1995 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1994 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1992 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

1990 Galerie Froment Putnam, Paris, FR
Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1988 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US
Fuller Gross Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US

1987 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1986 Galerie Krinzinger, Innsbruck, AS
Reed College, Portland, OR, US
Arte Contemporanea, Mexico City, MX
Nave Museum, Victoria, TX, US
Larry Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1985 University of California, Riverside, CA Washington University, Bellingham, WA, US
Mo David Gallery, New York, NY, US
Fuller Goldeen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
Larry Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1984 Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, NY, US
Roger Ramsay Gallery, Chicago, IL, US
Patty Aande Gallery, San Diego, CA, US
Eaton-Shoen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
Ulrike Kantor Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1983 Eaton-Shoen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
Ulrike Kantor Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA, US
University of Redlands, Redlands, CA, US

1982 Akademie Der Kunst, Karlsruhe, DE
Ulrike Kantor Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1981 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, US
Ulrike Kantor Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1980 Jetwave Inc., San Francisco, CA, US

1979 Dana Reich Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US

1977 Goethe Institute, San Francisco, CA, US

1973 Galerie Am Neumarkt, Saarbruecken, DE

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025 Radical Making, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Paris, FR

2024 *Halfway to Sanity*, The Pit, Los Angeles, CA, US

2023 *Tony Marsh: Fever Dream Duet*, Albertz Benda, Los Angeles, CA, US
Root Systems: An Exhibition of Works on Paper, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Pollen on a West Wind, Curated by Tony Marsh, Jason Jacques Gallery, New York, NY, US

2022 *Spring 2022*, Side Gallery, Casavells, Cataluna, ES
Maestri, De Cotiis Gallery, Milan, IT
Summertime Rolls, La Loma Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US
Vessels, Sized, Los Angeles, CA, US
Alain Biltereyst, Roger Herman and Margaret Lee, Jack Hanley Gallery, New York, NY, US

2021 *Art and Hope*, Fischer Museum, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, US
Dog Days, The Pit, Palm Springs, CA, US
Ceramics Now, Galerie Italienne, Paris, FR
Jack Hanley Gallery, East Hampton, NY, US
Via Café, Tiff Sifrids Gallery, Atlanta, GA, US
Les Flammes – L'Âge de la céramique, Musée d'Art Moderne De Paris, Paris, FR

2020 *Soft Vibrations: Roger Herman, Jim Iserman, Heather*, Praz Delavallade, Los Angeles, CA, US
Pacific Coast Ceramics, Galeria Mascota, Aspen, CO, US
Sample Platter, Guggenheim Gallery at Chapman Gallery, Orange, CA, US
Death Cult, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA, US

2019 *Dark Fantasy*, UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles, CA, US
Carpenters Workshop Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
Museo National de la Estampa, Mexico City, MX
Pop Up Anthology, Vincenzo de Cotis Gallery, Milan, IT

2018 Dos Collectivos,Instituto de Artes Graficasde Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MX
Clayborn, Lefebvre et Fils, Paris, FR
LA Friends, Rental Gallery, East Hampton, NY, US
Summer Roundup, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

2017 *Books*, LMAC Gallery, New York, NY, US

Amidst, China Art Objects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2016 *Between something and nothing*, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA, US
Figure as Form, curated by Katie Bode, LTD, Los Angeles, CA, US
Bottom Floor, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Contemporary Woodcuts, University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA, US

2015 *Highland Park Museum of Ceramic Art*, Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US
James Harris Gallery, Seattle, WA, US
ESMOA, ARTLAB, El Segundo, Los Angeles, CA, US
Vessels, Blackstone Gallery, New York, NY, US
WEST COAST, Lefebvre et Fils, Paris, FR
Works on Paper, ACME Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
And there is an end, Roberts and Tilton Gallery, Culver City, CA, US
Gesture, ARENA Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, US

2014 *Top Coat*, The PIT, Glendale, CA, US
The CAT Show, 356 Mission Street, Los Angeles, CA, US
Vienna for Art's Sake, Winter Palace, Belvedere, Vienna, AT
ACME 20 Years, Acme Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Archive Austria, curated by Peter Noefer, Trienale de Milano, Milan, IT
George Nakashima in Conversation, UNTITLED GALLERY, New York, NY, US
Looks on Paper, Ditch Projects, Springfield, OR, US
Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

2013 *Object Salon*, Roberts and Tilton, Los Angeles, CA, US
Paper, The Prospectus, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA, US
Aspects of Drawing, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, CA, US
MAS ATTACK, LA MART, Los Angeles, CA, US
Wir Drei, Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman University, Orange, CA, US

2012 *Venice Beach Biennial*, Venice, CA, US
Curatorial Exchange, Irvine Arts Center, Irvine, CA, US
Mr Natural, Gallery KM, Santa Monica, CA, US
Sexy Boyfriend, JB Jurve, Los Angeles, CA, US
Nice to meet me, Hayama Projects, Yokohama, JP
The Nudes Painting Show, 3704 Figueroa, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Cactus Painting Show, 3704 Figueroa, Los Angeles, CA, US
Landscape and Portraiture, Irvine Art Center, Irvine, CA, US
T*he Holodek*, Post, Los Angeles, CA, US
Selected works on paper, George Lawson Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Chasm of the Supernova, Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, CA, US

2011 *Under the Big Black Sun*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, US
RCM Galerie, Paris, FR
Works on Paper, ACME, Los Angeles, CA, US
Role Reversal, Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA, US
Los Angeles Museum of Ceramic Art, ACME, Los Angeles, CA, US

2010 *KERAMIKS*, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA, US

2009 *Hang the Curator*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, MI, US
International Large Scale Print Show, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, CA, US
Lovable Like Orphaned Kitties And Bastard Children, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI, US
Instituto des Artes Graficas de Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MX

2008 LA Weekly Annual Biennial, Tack 16, Santa Monica, CA, US
RAID Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US
Pruesspress, Rental Gallery, New York, NY, US
Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2007 *Grand Gesture*, University Art Museum, CSULB, Long Beach, CA, US
Material Affinities, USC Fisher Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Soft Core, Kim Light Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
American Symposium, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA, US

2006 INMO Gallery, Los Angeles, CA Daniel Hug Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2005 *Frank Pictures*, Santa Monica Flux Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2004 *Nature Study*, Cal State Bakers eld University Art Museum, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA, US
Galerie im Museum Ludwig, Saarlouis, DE

2003 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA, US
Sacramento Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH, US
Museum of Southern Texas, Corpus Christi, TX, US
Diannepruess Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

Drunken Masters, Gallery C, Hermosa Beach, CA, US

2002 *Drawings*, Low Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Albertina, Vienna, AT
Works On Paper Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Guggenheim Gallery at Chapman University, Orange, CA, US
Atelier Richard Tullis, Santa Barbara, CA, US
Hayworth Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA, US
Ursula Krinzinger Galerie, Vienna, AT

2001 Galerie im Museum Ludwig, Saarlouis, DE
Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Galerie Peter Reich, Vienna, AT
The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, Miauhaus Studio, Los Angeles, CA, US
Black Dragon Society, Los Angeles, CA, US
Continuous Surface, University Art Museum, Long Beach, CA, US
CAA Foundation, Beverly Hills, CA, US
The Matrix and the Monoprint, Santa Barbara Arts Comission, Santa Barbara, CA
Miller-Durazo Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1998 Ace Contemporary Exhibitions Los Angeles, CA, US
BIG 2, Bank of America Collection, Plaza Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US

1997 *Fresh Ink*, Austin Museum of Art, Austin, TX, US
Eaton Fine Art Inc., West Palm Beach, FL, US

1996 *Wrestling with the Sublime*, California State University of Fullerton, Fullerton, CA, US

1995 *Abstraction from Two Coasts*, Lawing Gallery, Houston, TX, US

1993 *Physical Abstraction*, Blum Helman Gallery, New York, NY, US

1991 *Individual Realities*, Saison Museum of Art, Tokyo, JP
Individual Realities, curated by California-International Arts Foundation, Tsukashin Hall, Osaka, JP

1990 *Physical Abstraction*, Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US
Raleigh Enterprises, Los Angeles, CA, US
LA/Brazil Projects 1990, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Eighties, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., US
John Bergruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
In Perfect Silence, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA, US

1989 *Art of the Eighties*, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, New Jersey, US

1988 *Profound Visions*, Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US
Monkey Sculpture And Baroque Paintings, Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1987 *Avant-Garde in the Eighties*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

1986 Stadt Galerie, Saarbruecken, DE
New Prints, Hamilton Gallery, New York, NY, US
UC Collects, University of California, Berkeley, CA, US
Issues, Newspace, Los Angeles, CA, US
California Biennial, Museum of Modern Art, Indianapolis, IN, US
Inaugural Show, Ace Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, US

1985 Institute for Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA, US
Fisher Art Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, US
Image Abstract, 38 Crosby Street Gallery, New York, NY, US
Larry Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

1984 Fuller Goldeen Gallery, San Francisco, CA *Portraits*, P.S. 1, New York, NY, US
Painters Who Print, Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN, US
III Biennial, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, US
American Center, Paris, FR

1983 New Talent Award, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, CA, US
Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA, US
New Paintings, Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, NY, US
Huntington Gallery, University of Texas, Austin, TX, US

1982 *Figuration*, University Art Museum, Santa Barbara, CA, US
Fresh Paint, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, US
Four LA Painters, Pasadena City College, Pasadena, CA, US
Critics' Choice, Eaton-Shoen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US
California State University of Northridge, Northridge, CA, US
New Painting and Sculpture, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, US

1981 *California Individualism*, LA Louver Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
New Fauves, California State University of Los Angeles, CA, US
Southern Exposure Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US

1980 *Urgent Painting*, Jetwave, San Francisco, CA, US
Goethe Institute, San Francisco, CA, US

1979 Gestures, Center For Visual Arts, Oakland, CA, US
1973 Kunstverein Heidelberg, Heidelberg, DE
Biennial Der Ostseestaaten, Rostock, DE

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Orange County Museum of Modern Art, Newport Beach, CA, US
The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, US
The Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, US
The Achenbach Foundation, San Francisco, CA, US
The Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, US
The Museo del Arte Contemporanea, Mexico City, MX
The Gordon Hampton Collection, University Art Museum at California State University, Long Beach, CA, US
The Broad, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Dallas Price Collection, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, US

The Albertina Museum, Vienna, AT
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, US
The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, US

AWARDS

DAAD Grant from Germany
National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grants
New Talent Award, Los Angeles County Museum of Art



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