

CHRIS GAROFALO

Zoophytosphere Vivaria

CERAMIC SCULPTURE

Tiago Carneiro de Cunha

Chris Garofalo

Takuro Kuwata

Tristano di Robilant

Tom Sather

Arlene Shechet



February 2 – March 9, 2013

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 2, 2013, 4:00 – 7:00pm

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is pleased to present *Chris Garofalo's Zoophytosphere Vivaria*. This will be Garofalo's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

We are also pleased to be showing *Ceramic Sculpture: Tiago Carneiro de Cunha, Takuro Kuwata, Tristano di Robilant, Tom Sather, and Arlene Shechet*.

Chris Garofalo's Zoophytosphere Vivaria will feature her porcelain sculptures that emulate the genetic make-up of flora, fauna and aquatic life. Exquisite multiple glazes achieve the convincing skins and coverings that decorate these delicate subjects. Situated in a unique kingdom between animal and plant, Garofalo's hybrid forms appear simultaneously prehistoric and futuristic.

The collection of works on view in *Zoophytosphere Vivaria* is housed in custom-made dome structures, used for exhibition purposes only, that reference the environmental concepts of both biomes and vivariums. While **biomes** classify the earth's major ecological communities, a **vivarium** simulates an ecosystem on a micro level as an enclosed area built for keeping animals or plants for observation or research. The "camouflage" bases on which the works sit illustrate various biomes, while the reflection on each dome surface helps to disguise the tender subjects. This combination compliments Garofalo's desire for the pieces to "look like they grew or made themselves." Through these carefully cultivated mini biospheres, Garofalo seeks to remind the viewer that we humans present both the greatest threat to the diversity of life forms on Earth and the greatest hope for its preservation.

Chris Garofalo worked in printmaking and graphic design before discovering her passion for sculpture. A native of Illinois, she has lived in Chicago since 1980. She has been exhibiting her sculptures since 1991, including a highly acclaimed installation at the Garfield Park Conservatory in 2005, inclusion in the exhibition *La Carte d'Après Nature* curated by Thomas Demand at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, and recent solo exhibitions at the Muskegon Museum of Art, in Michigan and Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, Illinois. In 2007 she received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painter and Sculptor Grant Award.

The concurrent exhibition ***Ceramic Sculpture*** will feature the work by international sculptors, Tiago Carneiro de Cunha, Takuro Kuwata, Tristano di Robilant, Tom Sather, and Arlene Shechet. Each artist, committed to the tradition of ceramics, shares in the practice of pushing the medium in new and experimental ways.

Brazilian artist, Tiago Carneiro da Cunha, whose work was recently featured in the Sao Paulo Biennial in 2012, creates sculptures using faience, acetate, and resin. The figurative objects, ornamented with multi-colored glazes and polychrome finishes, resemble rather deformed bodies and amorphous monsters. Located at a cross-section of pop culture icons, politics, and horror movies, Carneiro da Cunha's sculptures speak to the concept of art as an object of desire and consumption.

Equally as lustrous as Carneiro da Cunha's works are Takuro Kuwata's wheel-thrown objects. Kuwata experiments with traditional ceramic methods of his native Japan, expanding the formal possibilities of his craft to develop a distinct style that recalls the past and points to an imagined future. Using the method of *Kairagi-Shino*, Kuwata thickly glazes the surfaces and then removes the work from the kiln before it has completely melted. The resulting effect manifests bursts of gold and mercury that penetrate and explode the skins of his ceramics. Though in appearance, Kuwata's pots appear far removed from traditional Japanese tea ceremony ware, the artist believes that his work shares the dual sensitivity of the ritual vessels, representing both a specific function and an abstract aesthetic.

Also attracted to reflective glazes is the Italian sculptor, Tristano di Robilant, whose ceramic sculptures seek to interact with natural light. The works, often made up of disparate forms stacked one on top of another are tactile; their glossy surfaces celebrate the materiality of clay. With intentional concern for the space that his sculptures occupy, Robilant plays with the dichotomies of internal and external, playful and formal, the container and the contained.

American ceramicist Tom Sather makes low-fired vessels in subtle hues of deep brown, charcoal, and black. Though made from the same material, with relatively the same process, each pot is unique in its asymmetry. Each work has a definite front and back to them; the subtle lip on each vessel invites the viewer to come in for a closer look to appreciate the rich graphite tone of the interiors. Made in a practice of meditation, the pots embody shift and stasis simultaneously.

Known for employing a practice of meditation in the studio is New York-based sculptor Arlene Shechet. Shechet's glazed ceramic objects appear to float and twist on unadorned concrete, plaster, wood, and steel. The evidence of Shechet's hand in the modeled surface of her objects embraces the inherent excellence of clay to reflect the artist's touch. Coiled, pulled, stretched, and lumped, the clay of Shechet's creations treads a fine line between balance and chaos, reflecting her belief that "though failure is a constant threat in ceramics, it is a quality I strive to cultivate."

To underscore the deep history of ceramics as one of the oldest and most revered art forms, we are exhibiting a selection of ancient ceramics from the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Among these works are a bottle from Casas Grandes, Chavin Culture, Peru dated around 1200 BC and a once functional strainer from the Indus Valley civilization (2600 B.C. to 1700 B.C.) which was located in what is now part of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is located at 118 North Peoria Street, Chicago. Gallery hours are Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–5:30 pm, Saturday 11 am–5:30pm. The exhibition is free and open to the public. Please contact rhoffman@rhoffmangallery.com for further information.