

Cammie Staros: Becoming Whilst Dissolving



• Title : Cammie Staros, Eros and Anteros, ceramic, MDF, epoxy, paint, 48 x 20 x 40 inches, 2017





Title : Cammie Staros, What Will Have Being (series), ceramic, acrylic, plants and fish, 54 x 30 x 12 inches

Website : <https://cammiestaros.com/home.html>

Credit : Courtesy the artist

Cammie Staros: Becoming Whilst Dissolving

Text by Gabriella Sonabend

For Los Angeles-based Cammie Staros, Greek antiquities are an anchor and a point of departure from which to deconstruct visual language and forge alternative systems of representation. Staros uses the pot to talk about the way we relate to Western art history, to the context of the modern museum and to the departure from restrictive historical narratives.

Using the traditional method of hand coiling with terra sigillata and terracotta, Staros' process echoes that of ancient craftspeople, affording craft and conceptual enquiry the same value within her

practice. Whilst a number of contemporary artists (notably Grayson Perry) employ the ancient use of the pot as a canvas on which to depict a figurative narrative, Staros uses the amphora as an anthropomorphic entity where it's physicality and manipulation (piercing, twisting, warping, supported by structures) reference a plethora of human emotions and conditions evoking vulnerability, tension, codependence, resistance even perversion. Playing with the uncanny, her vessels may appear conventional but on closer inspection subvert any useful purpose; non-functional objects standing in for the figure whilst eluding the binaries of gender identifications.

Over time, Staros' references to antiquity have become increasingly complex. Works fusing Grecian vessels with North American totemic structures point to co-existing histories and ponder the phenomena of imagery and vessels used simultaneously across the world for practical and spiritual means. As the medium of clay itself allows for the folding and transfiguration of one form seamlessly into another, so conceptually histories fold into themselves. With references as broad as African ceremonial masks, modern sculptors such as Brancusi, First Nations art and pre-Colombian ritual vessels, in this equation the pot is the constant, allowing for endless variables to be called into question.

Highlighting the co-existence of histories (canonical, folk, aural, visual) Staros invites questions about the future and the way humanity develops its narrative in the rapidly changing face of the natural world and in light of new technologies. Staros' current works are vitrines and living aquariums where deconstructed pots are integrated into environments referencing systems of display found in the Greek wings of the Metropolitan or British Museum. Evoking a foreshadowing of future abandon and biospheric shift, the amphorae at the heart of these displays appear to have "adapted to their watery habitats ... sinking back towards an organic state". Looking forward whilst looking back, these works recall the romanticism of underwater discoveries and legends of long-lost civilisations reclaimed by the oceans, whilst suggesting potential

futures where the biosphere as we know it becomes a museum relic, awaiting some future beings to decode and contextualise as we continue to in archaeology.

During lockdown Staros' ceramics have morphed. Forms evolving from vessels into half-shells unravelling to be one and the same, suggesting a lack of distinction between the manmade and naturally formed, evolution as devolution, becoming whilst dissolving. These pieces embody a distinctive poetic proposition; the human made and naturally formed are one and the same, nature and culture rolled together in an endless cycle defining history and the future.

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