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Domestic Curiosities

Larry D. Buller

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, lbuller428@yahoo.com

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Domestic Curiosities

by

Larry D. Buller

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Margaret Bohls

Lincoln, Nebraska

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DOMESTIC CURRIOSITIES

Larry Buller, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2017

Advisor: Margaret Bohls

My art at first glance suggests the domestic, ornamental nature of ceramic objects, but upon closer inspection one discovers a showy, transgressive content that is conceptualized around issues of gay sexuality, the phallus and fetish objects. I create decorative sculptures that resonate with my varied experiences as a gay man. Clay with its endless possibilities for form and surface, is the ideal medium for my subversive intentions. It allows me to blend the rich historical language of ceramic art with the low-brow, and in my case, kitsch nature of craft that one might find in second hand stores. I invite the viewer to delight in the excessive, glitzy surface and form of my work as they discover a more sinister objective. By employing embellishments such as gold luster, fake fur, glitter and plastic gemstones I “queer up” the surface quality of my pieces and in doing so question the nature of what might be considered good taste for the home. In a larger sense, this line of inquiry is a metaphor for my life as a gay person who does not conform to the conventional role society defines for men. The intention of my work is not to shock but create a dialog around topics we generally do not discuss openly in public such as beliefs regarding masculinity and sexual orientation.

My process is informed by my passion for collecting and curating vintage objects and photographs into collections. When displayed en masse these assemblages create real or imagined narratives that fuel my imagination and, in turn, inform my work. The use of multiples in my art directly relates to my affinity for collecting items that are variations on a specific

theme. I often create plaster molds of collected items and then reassemble the resulting objects into new and suggestive sculptural forms that masquerade as functional objects. I also create reproductions of collectible plates that become a vehicle for images of politicians, evangelical preachers and 80s era porn stars. These plates are amassed to create a dialogue in which each piece contributes to the overall narrative around the convergence of sexual identity, homophobia, politics and radical ideology.

I create art that highlights the dichotomy between function and non-function, vulgar and tasteful and chaste and sinister. I invite the viewer to delight in this line of inquiry while questioning previously held beliefs regarding the nature of sexual identity and the role of ceramic art as a change agent in society.

