

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity,  
School of Art, Art History and Design

Art, Art History and Design, School of

---

4-2017

# Ephemeral Permanence

Emily Reason

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, [reasonpots@gmail.com](mailto:reasonpots@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents>



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), and the [Fine Arts Commons](#)

---

Reason, Emily, "Ephemeral Permanence" (2017). *Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design*. 123.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents/123>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art, Art History and Design, School of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

EPHEMERAL PERMANENCE

By

Emily Reason

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 Professor Margaret Bohls

Lincoln, NE

April 2017

# EPHEMERAL PERMANENCE

Emily Reason, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska 2017

Advisor: Margaret Bohls

Traditional pottery forms and images of flora, fauna and rural architecture in *Ephemeral Permanence* awaken memory through the sensations and associations they suggest. These works are memorials to beauty, craft, culture and nature. I capture what is fleeting, make it tangible and endow it with longevity. Graceful movement paired with an element of danger reveals the complicated nature of beauty, waning culture is depicted with meticulous stability to conjure nostalgia, and form and surface celebrate craft and beauty. Icons of nature and culture in this work play a metaphoric role and serve to ignite memories.

I am fascinated with the relationship between the man-made world and the natural world. Symbolic meaning is attached to the behaviors of plants and animals and the uses of structures and vessels. Much of the imagery in this work is a recollection of my time living in Appalachia. I am deeply nostalgic for this place which I've come to define by its rural and craft culture and enchanting biodiversity. Wildlife represents the elusive, the mysterious and the majestic but it can also act as a metaphor for human character and spirituality. Barns, silos, sheds, jars, jugs and bowls carry the mark of the man-made

world. Firewood straddles both worlds. I revere the humble pot in its unassuming, yet significant role as an icon of craft and beauty.

I experience an elemental satisfaction when working with my hands; manipulating and mastering a material and technique through repetition and problem-solving. In this way, I am deeply connected to craft. Through craft I become part of something greater than myself; aligning with tradition and community. Human reverence for craft is embedded in our existence. Ingrained within craft is a strong sense of nostalgia which connects us to history, conjures memories and is a powerful vehicle for communicating ideas, emotions and stories. I see craft as a discipline, a history to draw from and set of parameters to push. It is an ideal of beauty that I express with great care and labor. Craft is the identity with which I mark each piece.

I work with clay, which is at once durable and fragile, to reinforce the nature of memory and give it form. By throwing, rolling, stretching, pinching and pressing this basic and responsive material, I create order and meaning. Glaze and fire bring a visual depth of surface and produce an emotive quality. This variation on the surface imbues the works with a sense of movement or calm. I use stoneware and high-fire glazes in part for their versatility and as homage to the traditions that inform my work, specifically, Chinese and southeast American pottery. These natural resources have been manipulated, mastered and reimagined for over a thousand years and methods for using them have crossed cultural boundaries. In this way, ceramic materials speak of place and cultural exchange. Hand-work and the ceramic process provide me space to reflect and meditate on the metaphors within my work.

Because of its lasting quality, ceramics act as vital historical record and indicate the deep connection of people to objects. History has provided us with a wealth of ceramic tomb artifacts- surrogate objects that ensure the soul's well-being in the afterlife. They are as enigmatic and awe-inspiring as nature. My visceral reaction to these objects and the idea of memorializing a subject beyond a single life has had a strong hold on me and has influenced the nature of my work.

My constant quest for beauty involves both formal and existential inquiries. I see beauty as inextricably linked to nature and spirituality. In nature and in object-making, I find that which moves, calms and elevates me. The labor and meditation I experience in the making process is intended to impact the interpretation of my work. A seasonal change, a fleeting encounter with wildlife, or a particular man-made structure on the landscape cause me pause; a brief and spiritual moment that reminds me of my humanness, my senses and surroundings.

I vacillate between a romantic ideal of beauty, and the more real, complicated nature of beauty. In its most basic regard, beauty is a means for nostalgic expression, my opportunity to savor and convey affinity. Through the labor and love of craft, I establish beauty in form. I seek line quality and volume that emulate natural growth and movement, reinforced with alluring surface, deep and varied. I use beauty to call into question our associations with the images presented; to deal with complex dynamics such as domestic and wild, order and chaos, life and death.

My work is a means to make permanent what is ephemeral.







