ELSEWHERE



ZINE 01

A CONVERSATION
ON OBJECTS AND SPACE

CECILIA HAMMARÉN & ANIA GRAJEK



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I first came to ceramics because there were things I couldn't paint, but back then I didn't know why. Painting, and more recently drawing, remains very close to my pieces.

C *So here we are: a space nerd and a space sceptic — someone who begins with space, and someone who begins with objects. It felt inevitable that we'd end up talking about objects and space.*

I'm very happy you agreed to do this with me because when I explain to people what Elsewhere is, I say: yes, first and foremost it is a space that has the capacity to allow a few people to do their work well. It's an atelier. But it's not only that. The function that is most interesting to me is that it is a space that asks us to pay attention, a space that seems to liberate attention through its size, details, context — even location.

I also see it as a space that is the host to the objects that inhabit it, a space for objects to play in. And this is actually the true starting point of the event we're creating. I couldn't get over how fun it was to play with your pieces in Elsewhere, no matter their size, and how brightly they shone, how confident they looked.

A Thank you… I wonder whether they are confident because they are such individuals. Maybe a certain confidence can only be carried off individually – a series is more co-dependent. These works, being small, tend to end up being presented in groups. But a group is quite different from a series. Perhaps groups allow for more 'play'?

C *Exactly, a series seems to hint at some sort of repetition, a reuse of elements. A series tends toward a single trajectory whereas a group can contain several trajectories. You can juxtapose the pieces, they live in relation to each other. I guess that's a form of play. I really like playing with that.*

I think I'm mostly interested in objects in relation to a space, though. How space and object interact and form relations. I really like creating rooms or situations with the feeling that you've entered halfway through an experiment. That'd be my form of humour, my way of practising freedom from instant recognition. Your pieces in themselves have an incredibly experimental feeling to me, they contain in them a mystery. Maybe that's what their small size does. I really want to look at them carefully, to know them up close.



A Sure, get as close as you like! I have to say that I don't purposefully start out with the intention of mystery. But I think that the question of 'what people personally find mysterious and why' is very interesting, as is what they find strange. One of the things I decidedly cannot do is make work which bores me myself, so here my certain idiosyncratic standards come in. I am partly restless by nature and partly restless through anxiety so I am always moving towards the edge of what I myself can stomach, which is, ultimately, what satisfies.

C *We're unused to seeing small pieces of art, especially small sculptures, and you've told me they've occasionally been declared "not sculptures" because of their size. I find that an extremely blunt view, almost a bit funny. What do you think about that? In which way does size matter?*

A Well… at the end of a Brooklyn Rail New Social Environment episode (#1079) a participant named Carey asked the question "How is a sense of scale like a sense of humour?" and this has always stuck with me. Scale is of course different to size but this question at least acknowledges the place of humour in these considerations.

Actually I only encounter the problem of size after the work has been made and someone pronounces it, most commonly, as 'small'. When I make each piece I am driven by the urgency to materialise the particular idea – to record and capture it, as if time could run out. The satisfaction I get in following the idea through to completion has nothing to do with size. It is a satisfaction more of 'if' than 'how' (it exists). Maybe the sizes



I only like about 15–20% of what I make. 40%
I am ambivalent about and 40% I actively hate.
People often like the things I hate so I have to keep it a secret.

just simply match the pace of the ideas. Also, objectively, the pieces could be classified as notes or maquettes – but to me it is not so simple. I have tried to simply scale up small pieces before and I always feel that something gets lost in the process and they fail. It's as if they know someone is trying to make them be something they aren't.

Sculpture is a big topic. When defending my pieces as sculpture I always go back to describing them as having their own 'inner logic', which I do see as a sculptural logic. This seems more important than size. You can look into a piece and find that, even if you have to look down or get close as you said.

But I also have to add that I'm very bad at knowing what direction my work will take next. I may wake up next week with the conviction I must make a 2 meter totem, and I would honour that.



C *So you say your pieces in themselves are, as sculptures, self-contained systems of structural, material and spatial rules. But on the other hand, you work with a sense of urgency which may lend your pieces their size and also render them something close to what could be called a maquette or a note. They're complete in one way and a draft in another sense. This is a very appealing thought to me, the notion of being in motion and not claiming arrival.*

I've always had a feeling that the reason I've been drawn to design rather than art is due to the design process being so structured around working with prototypes, or maquettes, as you now call them. And I've often felt that my work has lost something, at least emotionally, when the prototypes have been translated into their final, finished form. There's a strange dignity to the awkwardness of a prototype or a maquette, that is very alluring to me. The experiment visibly continues, and it seems as if the maker has the confidence to refuse to resolve things too neatly.

I've got many ideas around this, of a space lending pieces a sense of being in a state of becoming. Do you think a space can do that?

A My relationship with my work 'becoming' is very simplistically focussed on the studio space where they are made – a space in which I spend unhealthy amounts of time but mostly denounce aesthetically in order to hone a particular discipline and state. I don't work with spaces as you do – tell me what you mean by spaces lending pieces a sense of becoming?

C *Ha! I'm very glad I'm given a chance to explain this. I've been occupied with the idea of relational space for a while — the idea that space isn't really a container that exists before the things inside it, but is produced through the relationships between everything that happens there. It is an ongoing event produced by the things, people, histories and trajectories that meet within it.*

Doreen Massey writes about space as a product of interrelations, and as something that is always in the process of being made. I think that's very close to what I'm trying to understand about objects too: that an object changes the space it enters, and the space changes what the object becomes.

I saw evidence of this while photographs of your pieces were being taken in Elsewhere. The photographer started talking about what the pieces were up to in different corners of the room, musing about how their behaviour changed according to where they were placed and in relation to one another. There was nothing static about the situation; there was a very tangible choreography of objects and poetics of space.



MEN WHO, 2025, PORCELAIN/PIGMENTS

Our thinking became quite animistic at times, and it didn't feel deranged at all. In light of that — and not to push you too much into the realm of space — I'd like to reposition my previous question. When you said your works are individuals, I wondered whether individuals also have neighbours. Can another object fundamentally change the personality of one of your pieces? Do your pieces change each other?

A I think the experience you're having is honestly one I never really have. Because of my overproduction tendency I have started finding the pieces post-production too much to deal with. The logistics of getting them all out at once to play with are too complicated and I get a headache just thinking about that swarm. I am incredibly happy when someone else takes this on so thank you.

It is funny that we share these animistic feelings when interacting with my work – is this something within the pieces themselves, or, that in being small they are easier manipulated like toy figurines into the configurations imagined by the one playing? Animism basically always feels that little bit fun – perhaps something from childhood.

I can grasp what Doreen Massey says about interrelations, and I do see Elsewhere as a space very willing to play – it contains multiple activities and possibilities, it prioritises the ongoing event. It also harks back to the tradition of artists showing and selling work directly from studios, which feels increasingly erased by digital interactions and the financial obstacles to making work in central spaces. The atelier, as meeting point between the artist and the person interested in viewing or buying the work is an infinitely richer experience.



I have still, unto this point, only ever worked in group settings. I have still never made any truly secret work.

C *Yes, I agree — the atelier as a space with a broader function is an alluring idea. It feels that on so many levels there have been forces taking previously functioning systems from us, breaking them into pieces, and now selling them back to us in fragments, making our lives extremely complicated, expensive, and dependent on external aid.*

This is what I wanted to experiment with when exploring what shape Elsewhere might take. Elsewhere feels like an honest space to me because of its multifunctionality. It's a space that can hold the full span of creative work, from early experimentation to the final stage of showing one's work. It feels empowering to hold all the stages of creative work in one place, and to be able to invite others in to participate and enjoy them. At a very basic level, I think we all want to be independent and connected, rather than dependent and disconnected.



It's a curated space, thought through, but all the same a space with clay splatter on the walls. And honestly, I can't wait for faint paths of dirt to emerge on the floor from years of treading between the places most used in the studio. The patina of a space alive.

We both read the Boris Groys interview with the quote: "Art does not manifest the way I see the world; it manifests the way I want the world to see me." I misread the ending and thought it said, "…it manifests the way I want to see the world." I thought that made so much sense. I think whatever I'm up to, whatever I'm making, only really makes sense if it brings me closer to the way I want to see the world. And above all, I long for a place, a space, and a pace that allows for a deeper way of paying attention. Somehow, getting to arrange and play with your "swarms" — your word, not mine — of pieces has given me a glimpse of that.



AS PRINTED

“Art does not manifest the way I see the world; it manifests the way I want the world to see me.”

AS MISREAD

“…it manifests the way I want to see the world.”

BORIS GROYS, IN INTERVIEW WITH ANTÓNIO GUERREIRO, ELECTRA NO. 1.

Taken in Elsewhere.





These three artists have most influenced me: Agnes Martin – for the writings, Enzo Cucchi – for my imagined co-conspiracy and David Hockney – for hope and the duty to materialise it.



In the process of making ceramics I love the potential for both art and science. When the art part bores or repulses me I can run into the open arms of glaze chemistry and seek respite there – fetishistically testing glazes until inspiration returns and pulls me up for air.



The studio for me is a place for discipline and exhaustion. I am ever after a discipline which simplifies and aligns, and monasticism is big on this. But funnily the studio is also very low-brow and manual, like a gym. I go there to exhaust myself so I can sleep deeply.





SPIRAL SPIKE MOUNTAIN, 2024 STONEWARE/GLAZE

MARBLE STUMPS, 2025, PORCELAIN/GLAZE



ASIAN SHIPS WITH RECTANGULAR SAILS, 2025, PORCELAIN/COBALT



SHEEP HEADS (WALL 1), 2025, EARTHENWARE/GLAZE



FUCK-YOU CARPET, 2023, STONEWARE/GLAZE





YEAH, SURE, COME ROUND ANY TIME (2/3),
2023, EARTHENWARE/GLAZE



COUPLE CRUMPLE, 2023, STONEWARE/GLAZE

NO, NOT JUST THE TIP, 2025, PORCELAIN/PIGMENT/GLAZE



TIRED ARROW, 2024, STONEWARE/PIGMENT/GLAZE



CLUB FOOT LEAF KNEE, 2025, PORCELAIN/GLAZE





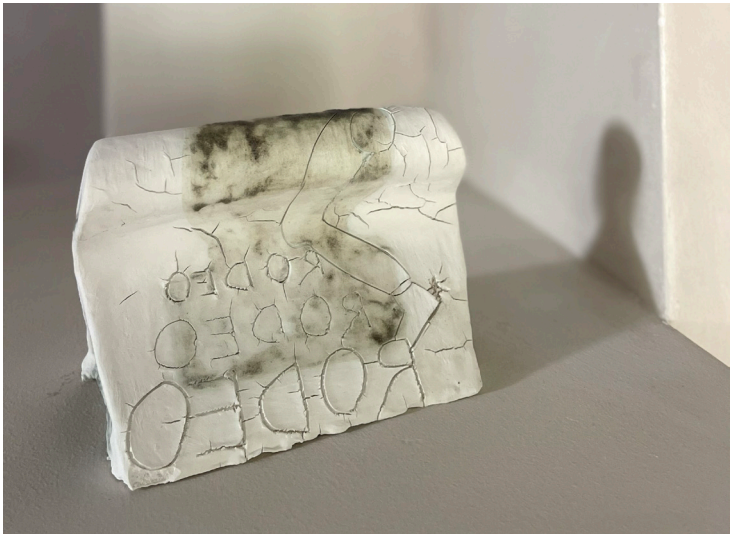
SLAP CHEEKS, 2024, STONEWARE/PIGMENT/GLAZE



BROKEN NECKBRACE, 2024, STONEWARE/UNDERGLAZE/GLAZE



TASTE A RIDE ON THE SCORPION BRONCO, 2025 PORCELAIN/PIGMENT/GLAZE



MY FIRST RODEO, 2025, STONEWARE/PORCELAIN/OXIDE

Ania Grajek

Ania Grajek (b. 1983, Poznań, Poland) is a Polish-born, British-raised artist living in Colares, Portugal.

Her current practice is focussed on ceramics, having trained also in painting, writing and art theory. She is interested in alternative art pedagogy and has studied at various independent art schools, namely Leith School of Art – Edinburgh, Turps Banana – London and Ar.Co – Lisboa, where she finished the ceramics programme in 2025.

She makes ceramic sculpture that collages references, hints and symbols in playful combinations – disturbing definitions and presenting poetic alternatives. The works seek to push the viewer to a break from rational and useful thought. They explore themes of tension, humour, transgression and her own compulsive overproduction. Pieces rarely stand taller than 20 cm but still call themselves sculpture.