

March 31st - May 1st, 2010

Opening Reception: April 1, 6-8

Annabeth Rosen: *Contingency*

Mei-Ling Hom: *Yun Nan = Southern Clouds*

Paul Swenbeck: *Shaker Legend-trip*

This April, Fleisher/Ollman Gallery is pleased to present three discrete exhibitions highlighting a range of contemporary ceramic work: Annabeth Rosen, in the main gallery; Mei-Ling Hom; and, in the viewing gallery, Paul Swenbeck.

For Annabeth Rosen, sculpture is a process of assemblage. Small pieces of ceramic – fired or unfired, glazed or unglazed, textured or smooth – resemble organs and plants and are massproduced and stockpiled in anticipation of their eventual use. Once combined, massed together and bound with steel wire, they start to come to life, becoming increasingly more complex as part is bound to part is bound to part, yielding beautifully dizzying, and seemingly impossible, structures.

For her installation at Fleisher/Ollman, Rosen takes her practice to an extreme, making sculptures that are amongst her largest yet. Standing nearly as tall as a person, the works comprise an array of colorful forms, from chartruese eggplants to black-and-white striped tubes; some even hold full vessels that could themselves stand as finished works were they to be unbound. Made to be mobile with casters and wheels, the sculptures point to their own bulk and weight while suggesting levity and a potential for movement. Also on view will be a selection of smaller ceramic works and largescale ink and gouache works on paper.

Mei-Ling Hom's new ceramic work, made while in residency with North Carolina self-taught potter Dan Johnston, continues her ongoing contemplation of clouds: their endless and ethereal forms and the metaphorical possibilities they hold.

Hom captures this degree of variety in both the shape of her sculptures and the firing process she employs. Bulbous forms puff skyward and compress into the ground. Scale shifts to encompass both the colossal and the intimate. Sculptures even correspond to others, with aligning concave recessions and convex protrusions. The surface of each peice, furthermore, is unquely marked by the physical brutality of the 2300°F wood-fired kiln. Traces of ash, which bind with the clay's exterior during cooling, highlight the patterned imprints left by the artist's hand. Many sculptures

also show the subtle marks of where they once touched others, a product of Hom stacking her sculptures during firing. For some installations, Hom sculpts multiple cloud forms of varying proportions and fires them together in a single stack, only to then restack the pieces in a different configuration, creating a new original composition.

The artist also cites a number of historical and cultural precedents as influential to her thinking about clouds, among them: Japanese screens, which often use clouds as spatial dividers and, as structures, are themselves used to separate architectural areas; the phonetic similarity between the Chinese words for *cloud* and *luck*; the prevalent use of in many art forms of clouds as the homes and transports of deities.

Lastly, artist Paul Swenbeck will present an installation of ceramic sculpture inspired by the notion of *legend-tripping*, the teenage ritual of journeying to a haunted or dangerous place. Swenbeck's will take viewers, via an installation in Fleisher/Ollman's viewing gallery, to various sites of folklore, magic, and belief, from the Salem Witchtrials to the sites of Wiccan practice.

Swenbeck's ritual space includes a table, handmade by the artist according to Shaker design, that holds a still-life tableau of the artist's take on traditional Pennsylvania Dutch Redware pottery. Among these austere reproductions lie Pagan ritual tools and alien plant forms, modeled after the Mandrake root, that appear to glow in the light of a psychedelic grow-lamp, imparting a phantasmagoric aura that whispers of secret belief.

About the artists:

Annabeth Rosen received her BFA from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University and her MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. She has taught at numerous institutions, including the University of California at Davis, where she is currently the Robert Arneson Endowed Chair of Ceramic Sculpture. Work by Rosen can be found in the public collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum, among others.

Mei-Ling Hom has been a prolific and engaged artist throughout her career, exhibiting widely both nationally and internationally. She has received numerous accolades and awards, including a Pew Fellowship and NEA Fellowship. Most recently, she helped open the new Southwest Airlines Terminal at Philadelphia International Airport with her installation of hovering sculpture, *Cloudsphere*.

Paul Swenbeck grew up in Salem, Massachusetts, a town synonymous with the witch trial hysteria of Colonial America. He has work in the West Collection, Oaks, Pennsylvania, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. Recent exhibitions include *Dirt on Delight: Impulses that Form Clay* at The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Swenbeck graduated with a degree in ceramics from Massachusetts College of Art in 1991.