

PAT JOHNSON - artist statement

I have been working in clay for 45 years in the small rural town of Fayetteville, Texas. The slow pace of rural life has given me plenty of time to sort things out and plenty of reasons to use my art as a mode of expression as rural Texas is bombarded by constant change. Through my art I attempt to unveil my fears and desires. I show the fine line between THE seen and the unseen, humor and sadness, and right and wrong

My narrative ceramic sculpture and tile work references political and social issues. My influences range from antiquity to popular culture. In these imagined scenarios, I depict myself as the protagonist or "the artist" taking action against racial injustice, political corruption and corporate greed. While I use humor to quickly grab the viewer's attention, the weighty statements concerning social, environmental and corporate responsibilities become evident upon further observation.

My work is labor-intensive and obsessively detailed. It is coiled and slab built. Combining my interest in drawing and clay, I have developed a style of working on ceramics with underglaze, underglaze pencils and pastels. Another exploration in techniques involves wax, underglaze and an etching tool and reflects my interest in printmaking. On my most recent work I have abandoned glazes and am using the ancient form of casein paint on clay.

Each project often consists of multiple works, often in a range of size; clay bodies; glazed or unglazed; and grouped around specific themes and meanings. I am constantly looking at art history. During that research and production new areas of interest arise and lead to the next body of work.

Recently I began a difficult conversation between a rabbit and a clown. The Rabbit is a reoccurring figure in my story. That she sat silent on my work bench and unable to act next to the clown didn't even occur to me at the beginning. Now I can't stop their interaction.

Making my work clarifies beliefs and feelings-- whether a social, political statement or a personal one. The ritual of making the work in clay can bring me back from the brink of frustration to a balance in me, hopefully, producing a similar effect on the viewer. I feel I have made a successful piece when the viewer can make it their own story.