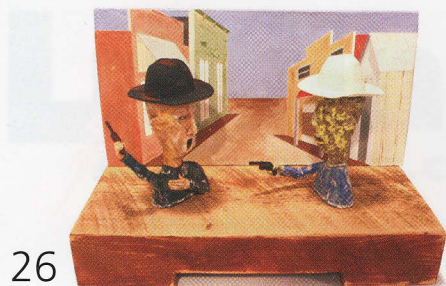




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upfront



Top: "Praying Man 1," 18 in. (46 cm) in height, handbuilt earthenware, low fired with slips and glazes, steel, 2007. Bottom: "Buzzards," 22 in. (55 cm) in height, handbuilt earthenware, low fired with slips and glazes, steel, sheet metal, wood, 2007.

Anderegg explores other familiar theses as well. Aiming at a different but no less universal propensity, "Shopping at Target" pictures a blond stretched out on a tiny lawn chair. Lifting her arms, she shrieks in terror as two buzzards swoop over her, eyeing the three concentric circles decorating her bikini at strategic points: breast and pelvis. The title says it all. Spoofing the stereotypical good guy-bad guy mentality of westerns, "High Noon" places two busts in front of a colorful street scene, painted in skewed perspective. The white hat brandishes a revolver at the black hat, who presses his

hand to the wound in his shoulder, wailing in pain. And is anything more risible than the alleged dominance of the male? Based on Olive Oyl and Popeye, "Dancing to Her Tune" features a woman sitting with splayed legs, fixedly fingering an accordion. Almost like a marionette, her partner lifts a leg, dancing to the music she makes. Who is calling the shots here?

A leitmotif throughout the exhibit, the buzzard takes center stage in its own piece, appropriately called "Buzzards." Three red, white and blue birds sit on a metal fence, wings extended, sunning themselves



"High Noon," 18 in. (46 cm) in height, handbuilt earthenware, low fired with slips and glazes, wood, 2007; at Goldesberry Gallery, Houston, Texas.

with obvious delight. A homely variant of the vulture, the buzzard is a scavenger known for its voracity. At the same time, however, that the buzzard consumes carrion, it purifies, becoming a force for good and a symbol of regeneration. The buzzard serves, therefore, as a fitting emblem against which we view Anderegg's mini-comedies exposing the human condition.

Comedy, as the celebrated cartoonist Al Capp has so aptly written, is based on exploiting the pleasure we experience in observing the foibles and vulnerability of others. And isn't that "what a comedian is for," Capp queries, "to make people feel fine?"

the author *Dorothy Joiner is the Lovick P. Corn Professor of Art History at LaGrange College, LaGrange, Georgia, and a frequent contributor to Ceramics Monthly.*

Kathy Venter: One

by John K. Grande

Kathy Venter's latest sculptures have the same sense of having been uncovered by time as her successful "Immersion" series exhibited in 2006 [see December 2006 CM cover article]. As artworks, these terra-cotta and polychrome sculptures involved an ongoing process,



"Sun," 50 in. (127 cm) in height, terra-cotta, polychrome. All works by Kathy Venter.

and emerged from the kiln reduced to 15% of their original size. The "One" series, as the latest pieces are called, are life-size incarnations of a process that is painstaking, challenges the artist and rewards at the last stage with surprises, in terms of final coloration, the figural surface effects and the overall impact. It is at this stage that Venter will sandblast these bodyworks, to give them an added patina of wear, something that contrasts the added layers of surface color.

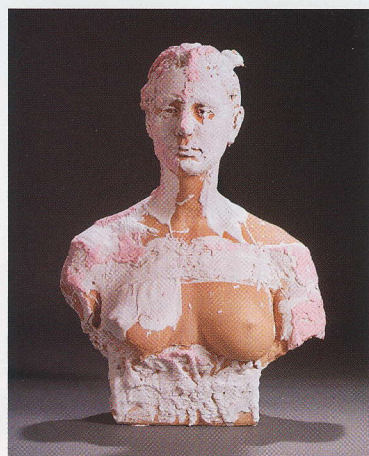
As Venter comments, "I have chosen, as the subject for this series, a young woman who has shared my island community and thus, indirectly, been a part of my physical, daily circumstances for seventeen years. By using only one person as the subject, I provide the viewer with an uncluttered reflection of self through another. The sculptures are direct and engaging, life-size, a measure of our humanity."

In her early years, apprenticed to the South African ceramist Hylton Nel, Venter was exposed to ancient ceramic sculpture from

upfront

China, England, Mycenaean Greece and Italy, and the human body quickly became a subject. These recent sculptures likewise capture one body—that of an adolescent girl entering into womanhood and, like the earlier Immersion series, these have some of that archaic feel, like the found figures preserved at Pompeii by the volcanic ash of Mount Vesuvius. They simultaneously cover and uncover, reveal and disguise the subject—a young woman. These instant archaic-looking sculptures capture their portrait subject with an intensity and accidental surface effect, something that recalls Manuel Neri's innovations...A distancing accompanies the tactile surface immediacy in these sculptures.

Venter's One series, unusual for this era, explores the artist-model relationship. The Sculpture Site Gallery exhibition, on view recently in San Francisco (www.sculpturesitegallery.com), evidenced Venter's great capacity as a sculptor who takes chances, using classical composition, while engaging in challenging polychrome surface effects that build a tension in the overall production whether in "Here and Here," "Second Order" or the "Head" series. Venter has taken the process of building up her sculptures using the hand pinch method a step further by adding multi-colored layers of hydro-stone (a cement-like plaster) and clay engobes to suggest wear and accretion. Unusually (due to the surface color splashes), a postmodern and relativist aesthetic that can borrow from many traditions and eras, including modernity, has emerged in these



"Head #2," 25 in. (63 cm) in height, terra-cotta, polychrome.



"Second Order," 68 in. (172 cm) in height, terra-cotta, polychrome; at Sculpture Site Gallery, San Francisco, California.

recent terra-cotta sculptures. Interestingly, these sculptures are not presented on pedestals. Instead, they engage us directly as physical presences. The dialogue with the viewer is active, and the language is as much about the process, and the artist's inner narrative, as it is about the physical product that results from that process.

While Venter cites the found terra-cotta army of sculptures created and buried with China's first

emperor Qin, as an influence on her work, the innovations are not at all like John de Andrea or Duane Hanson's super real sculptures that captured the everyday with a heightened realism, like three-dimensional photographs. Instead, Venter engages in building a relation to history through the simple act of interpreting her model, over a period of a month, in varying poses, at different times of day, in various moods. And the surface likewise references a process of mold making, where the traces remain after the mold is removed, a process Venter used while a student in South Africa. These memories of process remain in the

language of her unique sculptural accomplishment to this day.

The process of being and making or creation are thus both part of the essence of Venter's recent work. These works establish a dialogue about the relation between the sculptor and emergent form. All this is done with a basic humanist intuition. We are always in the same place, these incredible sculpture from Venter's One series seem to communicate, wherever we are, not by choice but by chance.

Submissions to the Upfront column are welcome. We would be pleased to consider press releases, artists' statements and images in conjunction with exhibitions or other events of interest for publication. Images should be high-resolution digital on CD. Mail to *Ceramics Monthly*, 600 N. Cleveland Ave., Suite 210, Westerville, Ohio 43082.

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www.ceramicmuseum.org

Armstrong's, Pomona, California

www.armstronggallery.net

Gladstone Gallery, New York, New York

www.gladstonegallery.com

Goldesberry Gallery, Houston, Texas

www.goldesberrygallery.com

Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, Oregon

www.museumofcontemporarycraft.org

Sculpture Site Gallery, San Francisco, California

www.sculpturesitegallery.com

SOFA New York

www.sofaexpo.com