

Touch

A central concept behind my work, and therefore this exhibition, revolves around the notion of “touch.” For the past 20 years, I have explored how the complexities of touch inform the way viewers interact with my work. The root of these interests came early, while hawking colorful Raku pots at local craft fairs. The same refrain repeated: “It’s beautiful!” “May I touch it?” and “Gorgeous!” It became evident that my work was too easily “embraced”; those one-dimensional reactions were unfulfilling. Even the more conceptual work—if highly textured—was mainly adored for its tactility. The moment I attached a single hair (eyebrow) into a polished porcelain surface, response shifted, and made clear my craving for a more complex—multivalent—art object.

While my pieces now contain strong visual references, I am more interested in the implied tactile ones; the things that stir in us a bewildering compulsion to touch. I’ve come to embrace multiple dichotomies: beautiful and grotesque, tactile and intangible, a desire to touch and a desire to flee. My highly refined, polished porcelain is still intended to seduce. But now, viewers are caught in an awkward middle-space, unsure whether to hover inches—or yards—from the object. I have seen people, obviously disgusted, sneak ever closer to (and then caress!) a particularly hairy form. This push/pull dynamic has become ubiquitous in my work, and I believe an examination of these complexities is especially relevant in ceramics, given the importance of touch in our field. Most ceramic artists, while working, are acting upon a profound desire to push, poke, squeeze, and pinch. I intend for my pieces to invoke a similar sort of temptation: to dare the viewer to touch.