

Tsehai Johnson
Artist Statement

My ceramic objects and installations act as cultural and social documents transmitting information about the most intimate details of human life. Throughout all my work I am neither descriptive nor literal but work to portray humdrum events, domestic conditions, and tensions through formal representations and juxtapositions. These evocations are ultimately somewhat abstract and their interpretation does not necessarily lead one back to the particular narrative with which I began. Most of my work thrives on a multiplicity of readings threading the literal to the abstract, the traditional with the innovative, and the pleasurable with the tedious.

In recent work I have utilized the framework of decorative wallpaper to investigate overlaps and relationships that explore traditional boundaries between labor and pleasure, public and private, and between repetitive tasks and beauty. Driving this inquiry are several converging interests, from the realities and expectations of home life, the close juxtaposition of labor and pleasure in domestic space, and finally an exploration of how the logic and organizing principles of pattern and ornament can create order out of chaos. This work invites reflection upon the tension between beauty and use as expressed through the objects that populate our lives. Utilizing direct references to dense ornamentation joined with fabrication with familiar materials opens the possibility of formal musings on the everyday realities of our existence, meaning found in the humdrum of daily life, and objects acting as documents transmitting information about the most intimate details of human life. I am not interested in assigning the work specific functions or a social agenda but more broadly in embracing the notion that all aspects of one's existence, however quotidian and frequently overlooked, are significant.