Primavera
07
Exhibition by Young
Australian Artists

Honor Freeman

Honor Freeman presents groups of ceramic works as still-life arrangements. Slip-cast in porcelain, these objects perpetrate material deceptions by mimicking everyday items, including containers that reproduce features of plastic Tupperware ranges, blocks of soap and domestic sponges.

The still-life genre, particularly when it involves *trompe l'oeil*, evokes the theme of time passing, and of death. Using one medium to depict another realistically (for example, oil paint to represent flowers or fruit, or in this case, porcelain to represent plastic, soap and sponge) reveals the material world to be illusory and deceptive. It reminds us that all that appears solid eventually crumbles away. In Freeman's works resembling Tupperware, there is even a wry joke about the way in which humble matter is liable to perish. The flowers in *Durable, reliable, practical and serviceable* 2006—synthetic decorative transfers applied to the surface of one of the Tupperware groupings—are clearly fake and thus preserved from organic decay. *An airtight container for every occasion* 2005 also represents a Tupperware series with lidded plastic containers designed specifically to conserve food and inhibit spoilage.

Freeman's vessels resembling plastic-ware are laden with nostalgia for the past; the distinctive styles they reference incorporate features from various product releases from the 1950s, 70s and 80s. The used quality of the soaps in *Worn* 2005, and of the sponges in *The rising tide* 2004, also evoke the passage of time. The dull discoloured sponges evoke wear and tear while the dirt-filled soap crevices speak of slow accretions.

By laying out multiple vessels in carefully determined still-life arrangements, Freeman quotes a number of renowned ceramicists who favour this technique of display including Janet de Boos and Gwyn Hanssen Piggot. Her work also recalls the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio Morandi. Freeman's homely subject matter slightly deflates the austere aesthetic rigour of the arrangements these artists employ, however: the spread of objects in each display not only quotes the still-life genre from high art, but even mimics a merchandising display that one might encounter where these objects are traditionally distributed and sold—at household Tupperware parties.

The everyday objects that Freeman is drawn to are also highly gendered. All centre on the home and evoke domestic routines, cleaning and food preparation, that have traditionally been considered feminine duties. Coupled with soaps and sponges, Freeman's Tupperware works seem to acknowledge the values of practicality, cleanliness and thrift touted to female consumers by commercial advertisers in the post-war era, a time when large numbers of women returned to domestic duties and child rearing from full-time work in the war economy. But rather than representing a retreat from active participation in the labour force, Tupperware is a testament to women's enterprise as it is associated with a then-revolutionary business model according to which women drove the sale and distribution of the product.

The soap and sponge works also explore a concern with watertightness specific to the discipline of ceramics. Firing and glazing have a number of purposes; in the case of a vessel, one of these is to render the surface vitreous so that it can hold liquid. Freeman's soaps and sponges playfully subvert this expectation: soap is consumed and destroyed by contact with water and while real sponges are designed to hold and release liquid, these porcelain ones would dribble water like a sieve.

Honor Freeman was born in Glenelg, South Australia 1978. She currently lives and works in Sydney. Freeman completed a Bachelor of Applied Arts (Honours) in 2001 at the South Australian School of Art, Adelaide. She was Design Associate at the prestigious JamFactory in Adelaide from 2002–03 and Artist in Residence, Guldagergaard Museum of International Ceramic Art, Denmark in 2004. Her exhibitions include *Snap Freeze: Still life now*, Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Victoria, 2007; *Make the common precious*, Craft Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, 2005, which toured to Santiago, Chile, 2006; *Ardore – New revival in contemporary Australian ceramics*, Sabbia Gallery, Sydney, 2005; *JamFactory Biennial* 2003, Adelaide; *Harvest – Newest Talents in Glass and Ceramics*, Quadrivium, Sydney, 2003 and *Hatched – National Graduate exhibition*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, 2002. Freeman was the recipient of the Design Institute of Australia Award, South Australian School of Art in 2000, the Harry P Gill Memorial Award for Visual Art and Design, South Australian School of Art in 2002.

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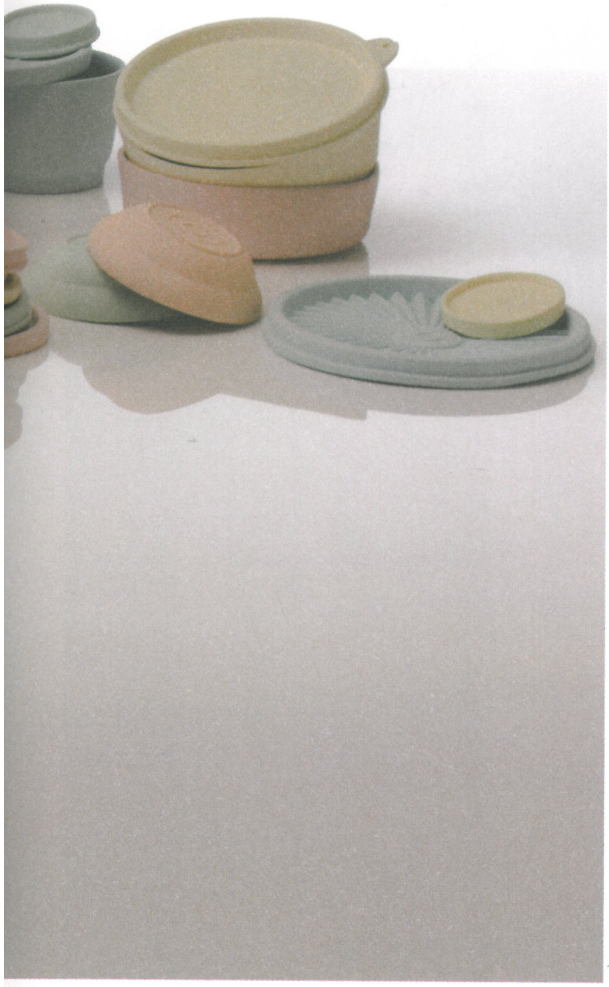
Durable, reliable, practical and serviceable 2006
slipcast porcelain and ceramic decals
36 parts, dimensions variable
Photo: Michal Kluvanek



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Markers 2007
slipcast porcelain
7 parts, dimensions variable

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The rising tide 2004
slipcast porcelain
18 parts, dimensions variable

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An airtight container for every occasion 2005
slipcast porcelain
67 parts, dimensions variable
Artbank collection

All photos: Greg Piper