

Clare Goodwin - A Pinch of Human Imperfection

The wall-based object with the title "Ceramic Block" (2022-23), is composed of ceramic elements of different sizes, which together form a relief. Lined up like a jigsaw puzzle, the individual pieces do not fit together exactly. The firing process has rounded and slightly deformed their geometric structure and pointed edges.

The object is one of many clay works by Clare Goodwin. The artist's independent, personal language is recognisable in it. Goodwin's works can be located in geometric-abstract painting without invoking mathematical rules of composition. At the centre of her work, however, are layers of cultural-historical meaning. Whether on canvas, paper or in sculptural form, her works bear witness to a poetic minimalism with clear, structured composition as well as carefully and precisely applied areas of colour.

As a source of inspiration, Goodwin collects objects that have been used by their former owners and given away at some point - objects that we humans use to communicate (non-verbally) or, as social beings, to connect with our surroundings. These include cut-out photos from magazines, furnishings and accessories such as foulards, ties or vases.

Looking at "Ceramic Block" (2023), I am reminded of the ambience of a vintage shop filled with design classics, or of 1970s home furnishings inhabited by garish, shiny orange plastic utensils, while the owners themselves walk around on a flagstone floor that mimics dark red or brown. Also striking are the orange building blocks that seem to look directly at us viewers like two eyes. They draw my attention to the sturdy vase, which is in the artist's own studio and which she borrowed from Tony Wuethrich's collection of vases for inspiration.

Both as utilitarian objects and as works of art, vases have a history dating back thousands of years to the ancient Egyptians. In the 19th century, decorative flower vases found their way into European living rooms and their patterns, shapes and colours have shaped our immediate surroundings ever since. The use of orange also dominated the colour spectrum of the 1970s. As a trend colour, it dominated in the home, was present in the world of design and fashion and still stands today for both the everyday and the new and daring.

This historical location of our material and visual culture of the 1970s and early 1980s always flows into Goodwin's artistic work. She is interested in private spaces in private homes and understands them as a reflection of a way of life at a given time, with all its questions and social and political upheavals. This includes family life in the middle and working classes as a content-laden projection surface - an image of an idyll that was reinforced by the press or through advertising. In view of this, a work like "Ceramic Block" (2023) also always conveys an underlying mood that oscillates from cosy to oppressive, expectant to nostalgic. It is the origin of an enigma of social belonging and collective memory.

For a long time, Goodwin works on canvas and paper, until 2018, when she expanded her media spectrum to include clay. She sees the use of ceramics primarily as an extension of her painterly activity on canvas, from which she picks up forms and translates them into clay. The results range from small-format objects to wall-sized installations.

In "Ceramic Block" (2023), Goodwin makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to an old vase by making its patterning and colourfulness the starting point of an independent artwork. With this gesture, the artist seems to soften her location in a sharp-edged geometric art. Also, the slight shifts of the forms testify to a conscious relinquishing of control, which is very much present during the application of the brush, but which inevitably happens through the firing of clay. As ceramic objects and paintings, Goodwin's artworks stand for private as well as social secrets that happen behind closed apartment doors and thus behind a perfect-looking surface. As a symbol of life, with all our uncertainties and inconsistencies, each ceramic object carries a pinch of human imperfection.

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