

SURFACE MAGAZINE

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Designer of the Day: Woody De Othello

by Ryan Waddoups



Known for oversize vessels that playfully distort domestic objects, Woody De Othello infuses his ceramics with whimsy, personality, and touches of African “Nkisi,” a belief system in which spirits inhabit everyday objects. A new body of paintings and sculptures, on display at Nina Johnson Gallery in Miami, proves why the Oakland-based artist’s star continues to rise: he gracefully expresses the anxieties of today while reveling in the small bursts of beauty and hope that accompany self-reflection.

Here, we ask designers to take a selfie and give us an inside look at their life.

Age: 29

Occupation: Artist, sculptor.

Instagram: @woodyothello

Hometown: Miami.

Studio location: Richmond, CA.

Describe what you make: I make sculpture (primarily ceramics) and on occasion 2D works.

The most important thing you've designed to date: I don't think I've made anything important yet. Maybe that's what's driving me to continue to be in the studio... the search of making something important or great.

Describe the problem your work solves: I'm definitely not solving any problems. There are some formal things and just structural problems that occur when in the studio but that's specific to the internal world of the work. The only problem that I see my work solving is on a personal level—it provides me with the space to be emotionally literate and vulnerable.

Describe the project you are working on now: Right now, it's kind of exploratory. I mean, it always is kind of the way. I'm just making what I feel. I'm thinking about making some objects under the name "hope omens" though. I want to try and put stuff out into the universe that seems a bit more hopeful. I'm not exactly sure what that will look like yet.

A new or forthcoming project we should know about: I really want to quote Lil Wayne. He has a line that goes "Real Gs move in silence like lasagna." It's kind of weird to talk about the future because plans can always fall through. But I'm gearing up for a residency at Paulson Fontaine Press. I'm super excited about that. We'll see what 2021 has in store.

What you absolutely must have in your studio: A clear mind, hopeful optimistic attitude, some good tunes, maybe a podcast, and definitely water.

What you do when you're not working: Mostly just kicking it with my dog Mia these days. We get out on hikes and walks all the time. Also loads of exercise and making food.

Sources of creative envy: Phillip Guston, Jacob Lawrence, King Krule, Tyler the Creator, Lorna Neale Hurston, Pharrell, and Simone Leigh are a couple of folks that come to mind immediately.

The distraction you want to eliminate: My own intrusive thoughts.

Concrete or marble? Marble.

High-rise or townhouse? Townhouse.

Remember or forget? Remembering to forget.

Aliens or ghosts? Aliens.

Dark or light? Finding light through the darkness.