

JAKE ZIEMANN →

Lumpen, willfully goofy, oddly moving ceramics are Ziemann's forte, and his work will be all over the West Coast in the near future, including in group shows at R/SF Projections in San Francisco and BBQLA in Los Angeles, and in a project with the art gallery Shulamit Nazarian next year. The artist's practice carries forward a conversation started by luminaries of the medium, like Ken Price and Ron Nagle. It's abstract sculpture cross-pollinated with Saturday-morning cartoons, blending serious formal chops with a sense of humor and absurdist pathos. Delicate masses—recalling drooping tongues or bulbous, alien phalluses—perch delicately atop sturdier plinths (plaster, milk crates, marble slabs). “The bases are typically utilitarian materials that suggest ‘the studio,’ or construction,” Ziemann says. “I see them as metaphors for the labor it takes to develop relationships with friends, lovers, and the world around me—a way to formally investigate notions of intimacy, codependency, and vulnerability.”

While his ceramic creations aren't meant to depict anything real, they possess an undeniable anthropomorphic charm. “I think of each of my sculptures as its own character,” Ziemann explains, “one that is simultaneously comedic, melancholic, and slightly awkward. And they're personified through the interactions they have with their bases: intimately resting, leaning, slumping, or folding over the support structures.” An additional emotional anchor comes from the works' titles—*into you, I just keep crawling* or *i know you will, i know you will, i know that you will*—which are borrowed from lyrics by the likes of Hailee Steinfeld and Lana del Rey.

“Even though my visual language is an abstracted one, my identity as a gay male does filter in,” says Ziemann. “Having grown up in rural Iowa, I often consider the agency we have to blend in or individualize ourselves within a particular context. In the process of making my work, I tend to think about how we assimilate and cope. The hand-painted patterns and colorful layers that adorn my sculptures are meant to mimic abstracted versions of camouflage: veil-like layers that not only individualize them but also shield them from personal sentiment.”



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