

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND REFLECTION

The project resulting in the exhibition “Fort Knight” builds upon my previous interest in questions on prejudice and expectations in relation to identity, gender and heritage. For this project I was interested in working from a focused thematic and explore how a return to more conceptual ways of working could gain from the experience of recent works where visual and formal qualities were brought to front. Thematic focus for the project and the exhibition is war and violence as contemporary and historic phenomena. I am interested in how they relate to expectations, prejudices and obligations for people as well as countries and governments. My aim was to explore how clay as material are connected to these concepts, both direct and as reference, and how this could be used in artistic expressions.

For the exhibition I have worked with different materials and techniques where clay and Ceramic Art is present in different ways. As a ceramist I constantly return to the question of which role the material play in relation to concept and narrative. It was important that the connection to, or sense of, clay was obvious. At the same time I wanted a variation in perspectives on the overall war-theme and how it connects to clay. This led me to try both new and familiar methods and approaches.

Raw clay has been widely used within ceramic art for several years, often in works with a connection to land-art and site specificity or when fragility, deconstruction or temporality is part of the work. I was interested in the raw clay because of its connotations to war and struggle, the dirty and undesirable aspects of the material. At the same time it was interesting to use as a blink to the contemporary movement within my field. In the sculptures made of fired clay the expression of the material varies and connects to the concept in different ways. Some of them almost resembles an unfired surface where others are very obvious ceramic. For the latter the connection to clay lays in the ceramic technique which is revealed or in a familiar ceramic object connected to the concept. A third component is textile elements. In the surrounding landscape of ceramic Art there has been several artists using textile as part of their work. I can see a growing interest to make textile works in correspondence with ceramics as well as using fabric as part of works and installation. In my case camouflage clothing where used both in combination with raw clay and as reworked elements. I see this as attempts for me to explore the expansion of the field and the possibilities to combine with, and gain from, other craft-areas why still remain within the realm of ceramic art.

Variation and different levels of “understandability” is something I strive to achieve within a thematic show. The objects and installations speak of sub-concepts on war and violence stretching from popular-culture and traditional boyish games to expectations, shame and demands. These are also manifested in more or less obvious ways.

When raw clay and clothing are used there is a direct relation to bodies and battlefields as well as play and leisure. The white dove-sculpture speaks of peace but it is also a paraphrase of a tombstone-sculpture. Bunkers lined up as an army of concrete soldiers also seem to be made of, and arisen from, the battleground itself. A wall stands for fencing and defence but also re-building.

None of the works could be said to reveal the subject in its harshest sense. Instead humour, references in titles and double meaning in motives are pointing towards how war and its violence is normalised, and made distanced through popular and everyday culture. At least for those of us who do not live with war as a part of our daily life.

The process leading to the exhibition included a lot of thinking and rethinking of the concept and which subjects to bring forward. My initial inspiration where the clay material itself stands for struggle and despair set the tune for the project but the many connotations of the material also allowed me to bring different issues to front. Afterwards it strikes me that there is an even closer connection between war and clay: If we understand clay as soil and in this sense as land, it is often the very cause of conflicts leading to war.