

Cultured

Zuckerman, Heidi: Romancing the Stone

February / March 2016

CULTURED

Romancing the Stone

Aspen Art Museum Director Heidi Zuckerman sits down with artist Liz Larner to discuss her debut ceramics show.

PORTRAIT BY ETHAN TATE



Liz Larner, in her Los Angeles studio, with one of her "ceramic paintings," which is the subject of a show curated by Aspen Art Museum Director Heidi Zuckerman.

PHOTO BY MARIL WOLFGANG (ZUCKERMAN)

One of the things that is very engaging about your ceramic works is just how painterly they are. Can you share a bit about your interest in painting and color?

My interest has evolved over the last decade. When I started out in the '80s, a lot of sculpture was mostly about form and not that much about color. Because of this dominance of form, I became very interested in how color could deflect or change our perception of it. The works in this show may be my most experimental. They could even seem like paintings because they are positioned on the wall.

They are also big! Most of them actually hang at least a few inches off of the wall, some as much as a foot off. That intrusion into the space of the viewer is one of the most surprising things about them.

I am glad you said that. They are almost moving into our space like sculpture.

There are a lot of references to nature in the works. Clay is, of course, itself an organic material, and more recently, you have been incorporating minerals into the works, as well. I think the ceramics also play with this idea of being landscapes because of the height at which they hang.

I don't think much about trying to make landscapes, but they do have a macro and micro feel to them, as if you are both flying above the landscape and focusing in on it closely. But I am not thinking of landscape painting necessarily when I am making them.

I was not thinking about landscape painting either, but I am sitting here with a view of a rugged mountain out of my window. Some of the ceramic

techniques that you use where two different sections come together almost resemble a fault line or a fissure in the earth.

That is very accurate and perceptive. A couple of the titles are taken straight from geology—like subduction, which is where one plate moves under another. I am definitely interested in drawing attention to the material as part of the earth, so I think you are right.

Will there be any surprises when you are in Aspen for the installation?

Definitely. I have never installed this many of my ceramics in one place before. The works have been created over a span of at least five or six years and most have never been seen together.

I was also thinking about the X sculpture that is currently installed in front of the museum. I have my own reasons for having selected the work, but I am curious as to what you think about having it in dialogue with the show.

I thought a lot about the building and Aspen itself with X. How because of its hyper-reflectivity the stainless steel sculpture sort of takes on its surroundings and reflects the museum's basket-weave façade. I find the building's formal relationship to the X sculpture really fascinating.

That's so interesting. I never thought about the façade weave of the screen of the building as a series of rotated X's.

I am really excited to see the final result of the exhibition and to see it at the Aspen Art Museum. Having the ceramics in a mountain environment is pretty cool, and that all of the stones in the works come from Colorado makes it even more special.