

Reniel Del Rosario

I work with ceramics to replicate and recreate objects. These objects range from consumer goods such as cans of SPAM, existing artwork, and cigarettes to archaeological works such as precolonial burial jars and stone figures. They exist in large quantities, often arranged in ways that emphasize their abundance such as piles, operating businesses selling the products, and archives. The things I choose to mimic and bootleg are loaded objects—their histories and value are what propel these works from a playful recreation of something already out there to the subversion of cynicism through satire and reimagining.

There is constantly an exploration of value—cultural, monetary, and historical. What's worth money and what's not? Which objects throughout history have importance and which ones have been deemed useless? What carries with them a tragic history and which ones are subdued in the midst of their common usage and acceptance? Value is toyed with and it's up to the viewers to readjust their own evaluation of the objects.

For the Uplift/Heavy Lift, these burial jar vessels not only reimagine the anthropomorphic cultural objects destroyed by the Spanish in the Philippines, but their interpretations in the modern day as effigies of both grief and a specific memory. During the COVID-19 pandemic, grief and memory were consistent forces in the minds of many. Though these burial jars encapsulate the memories of robberies, compassion, and admiration/loathing rather than a body, they still stand in for something long gone. During the pandemic, I feel as if everyone was mourning in their own way of moments and memories, with some encountering death as well. Though these vessels started out as a venture into reestablishing an erased cultural object, it seems they stand in well working their purpose to remind us of the temporality of it all.