

IN THIS HOUSE THERE IS A GHOST



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ROOM

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The Garden

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Attic

Welcome Home





The Garden

Welcome to the garden
where everything began.
Put on your socks,
warm up in your sweater.
Come close for I speak in soft whispers,
few words of another tongue.
I built this house
with my hands and bones.
It's crooked and it creaks.
You'll find me sitting on the porch,
Looking out over this garden
that together we've grown.



fig.1

Living Room



What is a ghost?

A tragedy condemned to repeat itself
time and again?

An instant of pain, perhaps.

Something dead which
still seems to be alive.

An emotion suspended in time.

Like a blurred photograph.

Like an insect trapped in amber.

– Guillermo Del Toro, *The Devil's Backbone*

My grandfather built my childhood home. He raised his children in those walls, who in turn raised theirs. While my upbringing was filled with a sense of fantastical childlike wonder, the foundation of this house was full of cracks. As the oldest daughter it fell to me to maintain the stability of the home. I've carried this weight with me all my life. Now it bleeds into the artwork I make today.

My aesthetic sensibilities come from my love of fantasy, the grotesque, accumulations of clutter, and otherworldly curiosities. An introduction to horror movies at a young age shaped my appreciation for the macabre. Regular watches of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* and *Kiki's Delivery Service* later became Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. A collection of 'I Spy' books had me filling my shelves with trinkets. Tokens of different memories arranged together to make me feel like I was living inside the pages. These left me looking around wherever I ventured, always searching for small moments of hidden joy waiting to be noticed.



My family photo albums are full of different memories that my work is based on. A documentation of our shared collective memory. These range from mundane moments of everyday play to more memorable events like parties and family vacations. These pictures are useful references for figurative gestures, hairstyles, and facial expressions I use within my work. Having the same faces to reference gives my work a familial resemblance. Each one becoming a sister to the next. Faces of those past and present, changed over time but forever remembered in these static frames. However, not everything is remembered clearly. Some memories blur with others like an unfocused photograph.

My colour palette is not limited to what the real world offers. I twist the surrounding environment of these photos to create a technicolour reverie. Like a child picking their favourite colour crayons when drawing a picture, I highlight the colours that make me happiest.

Working in clay allows me to preserve these beloved memories in a permanent state. I can bring to life the fairy tales and characters I once daydreamed of. From the monster who stole my socks to the creatures who resided in the garden. The Tooth Fairy from my nightmares, come to collect my teeth. A duwende who dwells in our fireplace, told from my mother's old Filipino tales. The forest spirit walking amongst the fruit trees that surrounded my house. Each finds their way into this world, no longer just a figment of imagination.



*You are a ghost like I am a ghost
but I am banging cabinets and TV static
and all you've ever been is silent.*

– Nicocoer





fig.2



In this house there is a ghost ■



When you're in a burning house, you think the whole world is on fire.

But it's not.

– Richard Kadrey.

Kitchen

Much like cooking in the kitchen, my creative process is chaotic. I don't like to plan what to make but rather let my feelings decide what comes next. I start by sketching out my ideas. Unless something excites me, they are often left to revisit. When I'm hungry to create something new I will shuffle through the pages as though it's a cookbook until I find something that will satisfy my cravings.

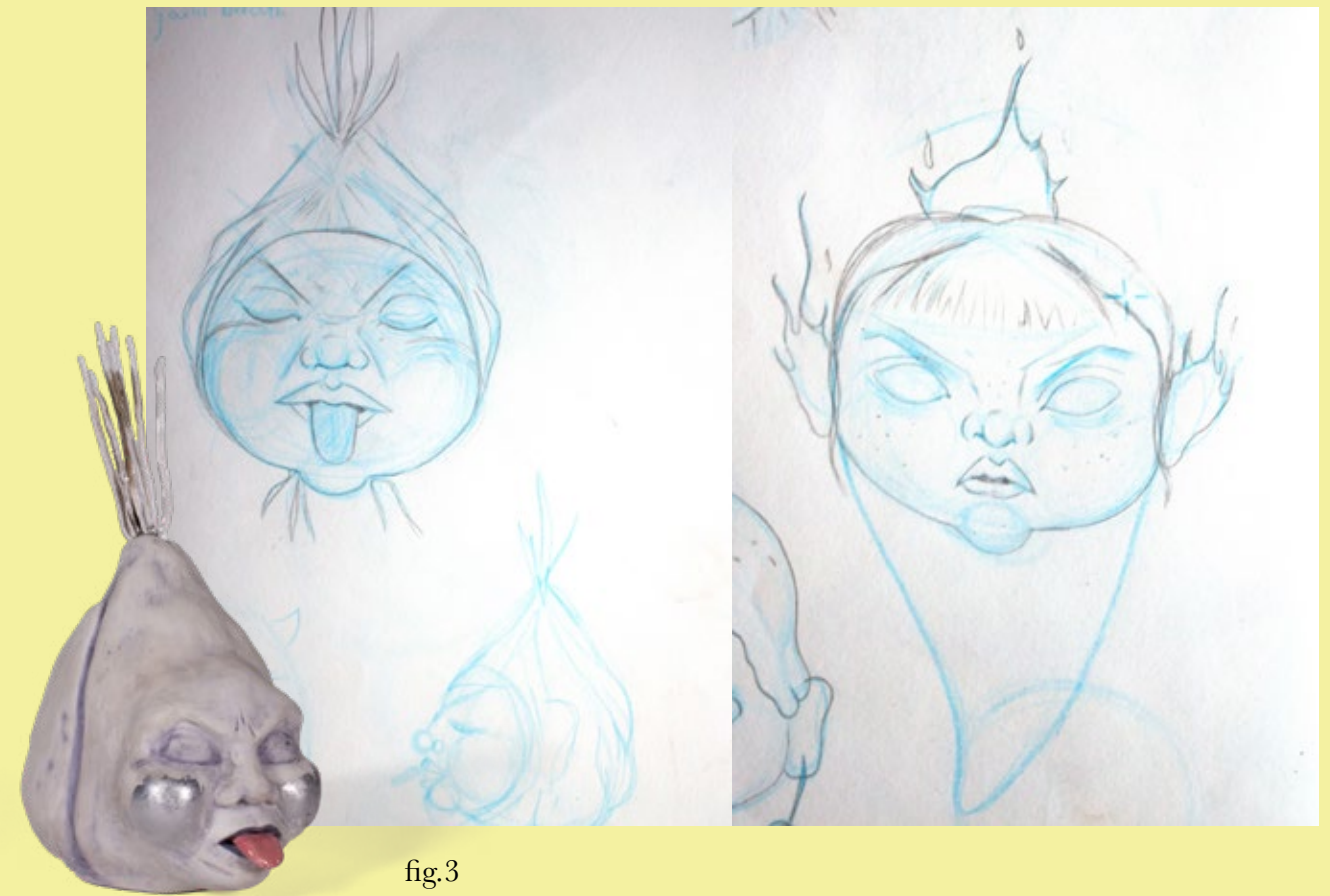


fig.3



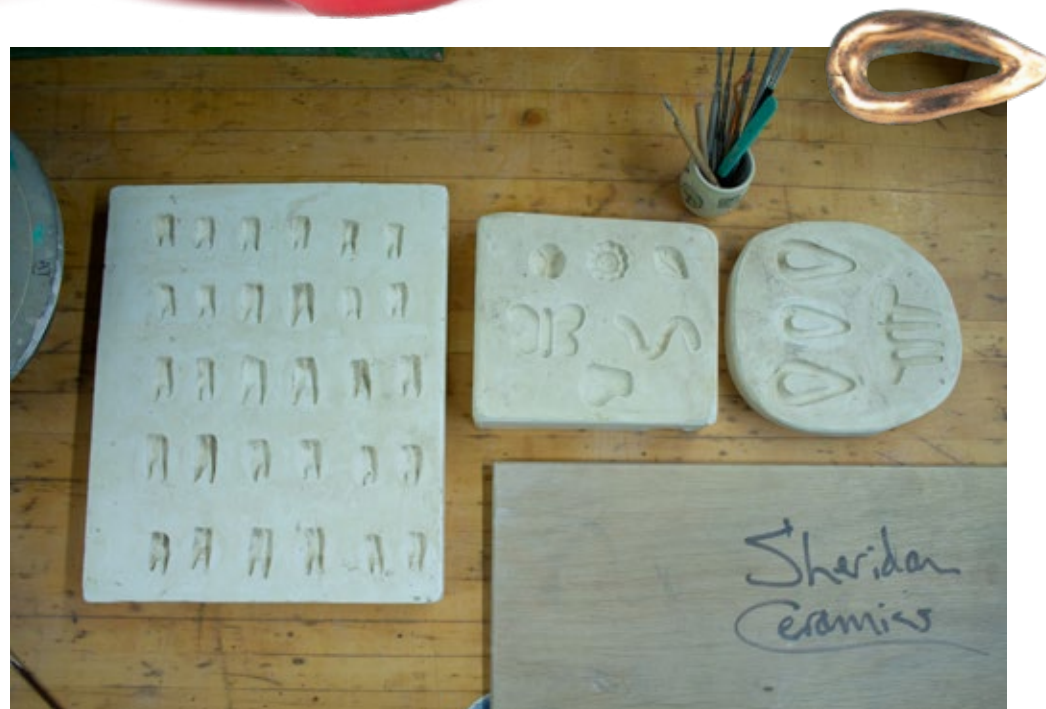
fig.4



fig.5

When moving onto the main course of work I use a mix of coil-building and solid sculpting. I use large coils to start creating the main shape. This gives my work a thick layer of skin that I can later carve into or manipulate into shape. By building hollow I can add an inner armature that act as the bones of the sculptures body. Pinching into the

walls as I build up enacts my fingerprints in the clay, leaving behind a permanent mark encased within. I mould their faces in my own image. If not me, then the faces of those I love. Squishing the clay into shape until it reflects what I see in the photos.



A library of sprig molds are used to create multiples of any shape. Though they come from the same mold, each varies slightly as they're refined by my hands.

fig.6



fig.7



fig.8



fig.9



fig.10

fig.11





fig.12



fig.15



fig.13



fig.14



fig.16





fig.17



fig.18



fig.19

Different ingredients such as coloured grog may be added to the clay for variations throughout the body. There is no such thing as too much seasoning. Layers of slips and underglaze are used to decorate the surface during greenware and bisque. Leaving washes of different colours, they are a painting that comes to life while glazed. Once I'm satisfied with everything I've added it is ready for a mid-range firing.

Dining Room



My work continues its journey even after it comes out of the kiln. One more chance for me to play with my food. An exploration of materials other than ceramics and glaze follows to finish the piece. Working together with the clay, this includes but is not limited to...

- FLOCKING
- GLASS
- GLITTER
- WOOL FIBRES
- RESIN

This final step ensures I am pleased with what I've made before presenting it in the dining room for all to see.



fig.21

Merino wool offers a soft contrast to the surface. Added with techniques used for doll wig making, it is jabbed into small holes where hair is wanted. After being glued, it is gently brushed into place. Once styled, a spritz of liquid glue sets it in place without disrupting the wools fluffy qualities.



fig.20

I use this same method when applying flocking. Used on a smooth or textured surface, flocking adds a fuzzy quality that can be layered for highlights of different colour. Glitter, coloured imitation leaf, and Angelina fibres offer a sparkly finish that would otherwise be burned away in a kiln.



fig.22



fig.23



fig.24







fig.25

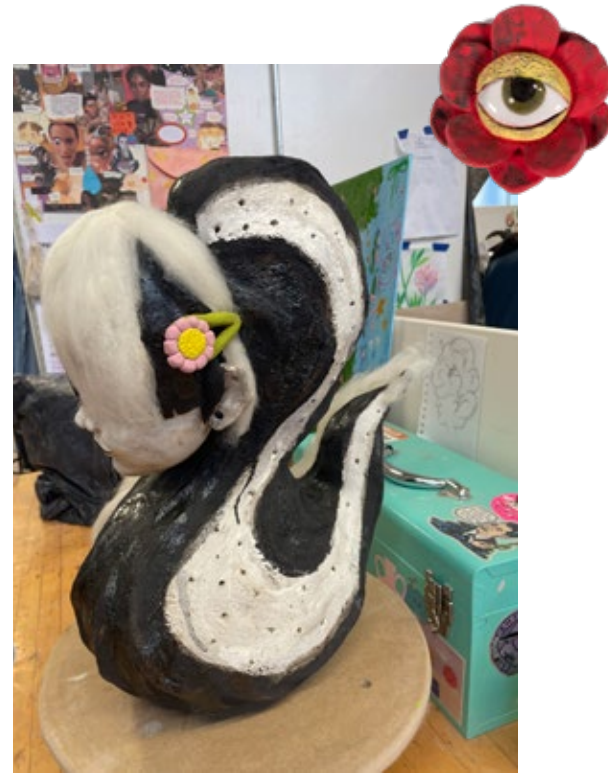


fig.26

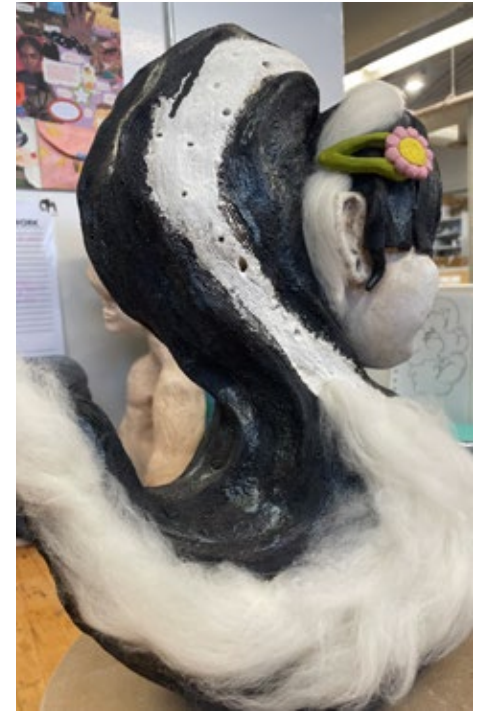


fig.27





Bathroom

Hair was an idolized thing for me growing up. Never being allowed to cut it short, it grew unbearably long. A heavy mass atop my head that took on a life of its own. Swallowing me up when let down and getting caught on anything it brushed past. Every morning would start with staring in the mirror as it was tamed with barrettes or tied back out of the way.

This great importance that was placed on the presentation of my hair now influences the forms I sculpt. Taking on a whimsical style or replacing the body, I take great care in how the hair is treated. Using hair combs as a tool to mark the surface brushes a distinct pattern in stone forever. With clay I can control this once overgrown monster.



fig.28

My body of work has grown from my personal memories, a reflection of who I am. If I am working from memories that are close to my heart, they should reflect my anxieties of being seen as they're told. Taking their eyes offers me a protective layer as I open myself up to tell such intimate stories.



Something that has become a consistent part of my sculpting vocabulary is the absence of eyes. Often concealed behind a layer of hair or distorted entirely.

*I've been planting flowers
where my foundation used to be*

*and there is waiting
and pruning*

and beauty.

– Keeley Shaw







My mind builds worlds where I go to hide,



sometimes I get lost in them.

Play Room

SHALL WE PLAY A GAME?



fig.29

I Spy with my little eye,

hidden throughout this book...

- 1 rotten apple
- 2 hands that have taken flight
- 3 clips of gold
- 4 wishes that were made in time
- 5 flowers looking right back



Various charms decorate the surface to help tell a sculpture's story. Each can carry a particular meaning to those who spot them. I always want there to be something new to discover. Different details emerging the longer you look.

Come closer, tell me what you see.



fig.30







*I built a home inside of myself —
some days it's the safest place I've
ever been...*

some days it's the loneliest.

— Keeley Shaw



Bedroom



And when you feel like your brain is a haunted house we can hold hands and walk together.

— Keeley Shaw



fig.31



fig.32



fig.33

Artist Statement

My work derives from childhood memories and recollections of family and domestic life. Reimagined through a surrealist lens, I create narrative-driven sculptures that combine representational imagery and the human figure. Expressing personal moments that range from everyday experiences to childlike daydreams, these fantasies are brought to life with bright pops of colour and figurative distortions. I use this ghostly cast of imaginary characters to celebrate my fondness for the strange and unusual.

Within these playful sculptures, the eyes are often hidden. By concealing this familiar feature, I am offered a veil of protection as I share my intimate memories.

Made with love,
Apelgeuse

There's a light on in the attic.
Though the house is dark and shuttered,
I can see a flickerin' flutter;
And I know what it's about.
There's a light on in the attic.
And I know you're on the inside... lookin' out.

- Shel Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic*



Attic

Appendix

- Figure 1: *Rotten roots, rotten fruit*, 2022. Stoneware, underglaze, flocking, gold lustre, mixed media materials. 21”h x 9”w x 5”d
- Figure 2: *Up in flames*, 2022. Stoneware, slips and glazes, birthday candles, mixed media materials. 7.5”h x 5”w x 5”d
- Figure 3: *Finish your food! Study 1*, 2022. Stoneware, slips, underglazes, glass*, mixed media materials. 6.5”h x 3”w x 3”d *Glass component by Austin Felhaber.
- Figure 4: *Finish your food! Study 2*, 2023. Stoneware, slips and glazes, rubber elastic, mixed media materials. 7”h x 2.5”w 3”d
- Figure 5: *Finish your food! Study 3*, 2023. Stoneware, slips and glazes, pearl lustre, flocking. 4”h x 2.5”w 3”d
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- Figure 32: Critique display, 2022. Photo by Diana DiNatale.
- Figure 33: Artist portrait, 2023. Photo by Diana DiNatale.

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IT IS ME

APELGEUSE

2023