

steven carson —

recent ceramics



My ceramic works are grounded in contradiction. I'm drawn to the tension between pure, utilitarian form and excessive decoration—between the industrial resonance of infrastructure and the intimate, ornamented space of the domestic. For me, the domestic is inseparable from the ordinariness of the everyday. Repeated gestures that underpin my making process mirror the repetitive rhythms of daily life. My aim is to transpose this ordinariness, transforming the mundane into something lavish, visible, and resonant.

I work primarily in terracotta, a clay historically used for functional objects like pipes, flowerpots, and floor tiles. Each piece is hand-built using a coil-building technique: clay coils are layered one upon another, joined and smoothed to create simple, robust forms. This slow, meditative process allows the form to grow incrementally, echoing the rhythms of daily repetition. The shapes evoke labour and utility, yet are overlaid with excessive, colourful patterned imagery—dry, matte surfaces bearing precise, hand-applied motifs, often contrasted with unpredictable runs of glaze aimed to introduce a dynamic interplay between restraint and excess. The decorative process is painstaking: each stencil is cut and applied, each colour painted individually to build layered imagery. Many hours and multiple firings are required. Yet this labour serves not utility, but ornamentation—disrupting purity of form and challenging the hierarchy that privileges restraint over embellishment.

My iconography draws from fragments of everyday encounter: scraps of paper waste photographed on the street, junk mail, discarded printed materials. I'm fascinated by the shapes of letters and symbols in ubiquitous word-processing fonts—forms instantly recognised in reading, yet whose curves and proportions are absorbed for meaning but rarely seen as shapes. This quiet invisibility aligns with my interest in the mundane as something overlooked or disregarded. In my work, decoration is democratic—anything, no matter how ordinary or discarded, can become a pattern or showy motif.

At the core of my practice is a desire to celebrate the mundane as a site of meaning—without making it heroic. My ceramics embrace contradiction, provoke visibility, invite reflection, and offer a quiet rebellion against the idea that art must choose between purpose and poetry.