

Art in America

TORONTO

CHRIS CURRERI

Daniel Faria

At the center of Toronto-based artist Chris Curreri's second solo exhibition at Daniel Faria Gallery was a cement bust whose face was deliberately sliced off during the fabrication process. Sitting slightly above eye level on a white pedestal in the spacious gallery's main room, the faceless bust, titled *Medusa* (all works 2013), has a feminine braided ponytail and a masculine upper torso, with clearly defined musculature. The work exemplifies one of the show's central focuses—the space between form and formlessness.

Consisting of 17 small gelatin silver prints installed on the walls surrounding the sculpture, *Untitled (Clay Portfolio)* is the product of a year's worth of weekly ceramics classes that Curreri took at Toronto's Gardiner Museum, where he photographed intestinal-looking pieces of clay—the students' failed experiments and leftovers—that were in or about to enter the process of being mechanically compacted and blended for reuse. Here, in the slumping clay slabs and collapsed vessels, the viewer sees formlessness pushing back against the form-giving process, as if the material longed to revert to a state before human intervention. Three large C-prints installed in the gallery's smaller second room, each titled *Virginia*, show the interior of a cave. In one of them, a tiled floor intrudes into the frame, indicating human attempts to claim and bring order to this natural space.

In the 1996 exhibition "Formless: A User's Guide" at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the influential book that accompanied it, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois defined the *informe* (or formless) as a de-sublimating "operation." While sublimation, in psychoanalytic terms, is the redirecting of libidinal impulses toward more respectable aims, with tangible social benefits, de-sublimation functions in the opposite direction. For Krauss and Bois, the *informe* works to decouple form and content, divesting painting and sculpture of their styles and subjects, and revealing the instinctual energies that are inherent to the process of making but are often repressed in the final result.



The work Curreri exhibited in this show accomplishes something similar to the *informe*. Depicting its subjects amid transformation, the work exposes the raw energies or materials that are tamed in order to create identities, objects or spaces more compliant with the human social realm. One photograph in *Untitled (Clay Portfolio)*, for instance, shows a mound of clay remnants. Despite the mound's overall shapelessness, form insinuates itself into the picture by way of a single intact jug in the mound's lower left corner, reminding viewers that this mess of material will soon be smoothed out and then shaped into various, discrete objects on potters' wheels.

—Milena Tomic

-Tomic, Milena. Review: Chris Curreri, *Art In America*, April, 2014.