

Francesca Fuchs

*how a rock is all
about surface*

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Snail Ashtray

Snail Ashtray shows a hand-built shallow coil pot with a clay snail sculpture in the middle of it. The snail ashtray is positioned almost in the center, but a little to the bottom and to the right against a light neutral background that is slightly violet. The snail ashtray's exterior is glazed white and where the glaze is thin, the clay ridges protrude in pinkish terracotta. The rim is glazed half white, half blue-green and turquoise. Little curtains of blue-turquoise glaze flow down the interior sides and pool at the bottom. The interior is aqua-green and blue with a few dark spots. The ashtray itself is maybe five inches in diameter and fairly shallow. It is shown much larger in the painting. The snail sculpture's rolled shell is attached to the rim on the right. The snail's shell protrudes as a handle. The snail's body is attached to the bottom, its head raised in a squarish knob. The coil of the snail's shell is made of the same rolled and slightly flattened clay as its body. It is painted a dripping ultramarine-purple.

I made the snail out of the same coiled material as the pot. I rolled the clay out feeling my way to the short back and forth gesture, pressing too hard in some places and making the coil uneven. I thought of this as a snack or peanut bowl with a divider and handle. I gave the dish to my father to use as an ashtray. He smoked a lot.

I saw the snail ashtray at my mother's house two weeks after finishing the painting and realized that the color of the glaze is much greener than shown in the painting. I no longer know which is more accurate: the painting of the snail ashtray or the ashtray itself.

Painted Rock

Painted Rock shows a painted rock in the center of the canvas. It is painted many different patches of color, a little randomly. Red, yellow, green, green-gray, white, violet. You see the dimension of the rock because the red changes in saturation from the top to the side. It is more saturated on the side, which is surprising. The colors feel random. The rock feels a little unsteady on the canvas. The horizon is slanted towards the right arriving at mid-center. The rock throws three shadows that circle outward on the light neutral-colored ground on the lower right. It is as if a small rock was thrown into the water and these are the ripples.

I found this rock in the painting studio. I think it was used to dab off extra paint on the brush, but it is both so random and particular that it is hard to know. When you hold it in your hand it is just the right size to throw. Not too big. On the canvas it feels too large to hold. It looks like a heart, not something you can hold in your hand easily. You get to touch the rock through the brush.

(how a rock is all about surface.)

Transformer

Transformer shows a sculpture of a pink oval head with a little red hat perched top left. It is on a light gray ground. The right eye (on the left) protrudes slightly and is painted a light turquoise blue. The left eye area (on the right) looks like it is made of dark red-violet glaze. The red-violet changes to black-violet and there are areas of dark blue-gray that look metallic. The eye shape is still indicated in the center, but the eye may not be open. It feels like a transformed eye or a portal. The hat and the lips are the same dark red. The red feels shiny and small areas of reflection are shown in light pinkish white. The red is very saturated.

The head is shaped like an egg except for the hat and two pink round ears on either side. The pink of the head feels flat and not reflective. The nose is long and narrow. The dark red-violet eye area starts directly to the right of the nose. The head sits on a round base that feels like shoulders. It is upholstered with a cream-colored cloth that has blue-gray diamonds on it. There are creases and folds shown where the cloth tucks under at the bottom edge. The ground is divided with a horizontal line that intersects the base where the rounded 'shoulders' start tucking under. There is a shadow that is as tall as the head on the ground behind and to the left. There is a white edge at the bottom and left side of the canvas.

The perky angle of the red hat is at odds with the blank forward stare of the head's right eye. I had trouble coming up with a title for this piece. It was maybe Magician, maybe Transformer. Oscar, who made the sculpture, called it Terminator.

Small Blue and White Mug

Small Blue and White Mug is made of fired clay. It is painted with tints and shades of blue oil paint. The mug's sides curve outward slightly at the bottom and then move upward in a straight line. The upper two thirds and interior of the mug are painted a violet blue. I would have said it was ultramarine, but there was a lot of violet in it. There are areas in the dark blue that are slightly lighter, bluer, and darker. The darkest area is beneath the rim. Below the blue is a band of mid- to light-blue. It is a little dappled in the painted surface. The brush marks are horizontal. Under the mid- to light-blue is a similar sized band of warm white. The white is a little browner just below the mid-blue band.

The rim of the mug is painted a desaturated blue-gray which is lighter than the sides. The interior is the same dark blue as the exterior, just more desaturated. There is a dark blue- to red-violet shadow that pulls from the bottom of the mug up toward the handle in an ellipse. The bottom of the mug is even darker than the sides except for a slightly lighter area of blue-gray in the center and a thin circle where the sides meet the bottom.

The mug's handle curves elegantly. It is mostly dark blue. It changes to light-blue just before it reattaches to the mug. There are two small drips of light-blue that are painted carefully on either side of the back of the handle.

Kore

Kore shows the head of a Greek sculpture attached to a red-brown base. The head is white and painted in shades of warm grays and cream. It looks straight out at eye-level. The head has long, wavy hair with a decorative band. The eyes are almond-shaped. The nose is broken off just below the bridge. The marks of breakage run into the upper lip. The lower lip is tilted into a little smile. The head is about as tall as the base and attached with a short dark rod. The rod is right of center, counterbalancing the head, which has more hair on the right than the left. The bottom of the head fragment sweeps upward in a curve from the figure's neck and hair on the right to the ear on the left—the figure's right ear.

The figure looks like a young adult. It could be male and female. The red base is a brown-red that moves from orange-brown to red-violet. It is square and has a wider rectangular ledge at the bottom. The rod is the darkest point in the painting. It is a cool bluish dark-gray. The ground is divided into two areas with the dividing line running horizontally across the painting a little less than a third from the bottom. It intersects the front face of the pedestal close to the top. The upper area of the ground is painted a mid-tone gray that veers toward red-violet. There is a very faint shadow that is more blue-violet on the right. The lower area is a gray-white. It gets darker toward the front edge and has a sharp bluish-gray shadow falling to the right of the red base. On the underside of the base is written in pencil Akr. Mus. 641.

With some digging, I found this to be an item number in the Akropolis Museum. The plaster cast was in a cabinet behind glass.

Orange Cup

Orange Cup is shaped like a cone with a small bulb at the bottom of it. It is made of fired clay that is painted with oil paint. The outside of the cup is painted a fairly intense red-orange. The orange is varied in hue and saturation from pinkish-orange to yellow-orange to brown-violet orange. It is most intensely saturated on the bulge. The orange turns to a dark red-violet brown just below the bottom bulge and along the exterior upper rim.

The interior of the cup is terracotta brown. It is painted in circular strokes to show the lighter and darker bands in the walls of the cone. The color shifts just enough from outside to inside—from saturated red-orange to a duller terracotta. The rim is a light pinkish brown and there is a darker circular area of brown just below the rim on the inside. The inside looks shiny. There are a few lighter bands that feel like reflective color. Inside the cup is an inverted U-shape shadow of violet-brown. There is a very dark circle of brown at the lowest point of the interior wall. The bottom of the cup is a light orangey-brown.

The cup sits very satisfyingly in the hand. It has no handle. It feels like a good cup to drink coffee and wine. My friend Sarah bought some orange and yellow ones in France. I liked them so I bought some orange and yellow ones as well. (I copy things I like.)

Orange is my favorite color.

Rock Cradle

Rock Cradle shows a speckled rock on a light gray ground. The outer edges of the rock curve out and round over like a wide, slightly flattened doughnut. The top of the rock is gently hollowed out. In the hollow sits a smaller rock. This small rock is oval and speckled like the large rock. It is cradled in the shallow interior. The speckles on the large rock are dots, dashes, and curved lines of dark gray on a lighter gray that has some areas of warm orange-brown.

There are white patches in the rock which are contoured by irregular dark lines. The hollowed interior is darker gray on the left and right of the smaller rock. There are still visible speckles in the shadow. The rounded top edge of the large rock is very light gray and here the speckles are barely visible. The rock is a darker, bluer gray on the right where it is in shadow. The rock casts a violet-gray shadow directly to the right. A dark line divides the ground horizontally. It intersects the rock just below its top edge. The upper ground is a little darker than the lower ground. There is a quarter-inch white edge on the far left of the canvas.

Rock Cradle sits in the kitchen. I imagine it was hollowed out for grinding. The stone it is cradling was placed in the center because it matched. It feels tender. It is speckled. It is made of stone.

