

Allan Stone Gallery



Robert Arneson, *Spiked Tea*, 1969, glazed ceramic, 13 x 4 x 10 ½ in.

Robert Arneson Playing Dirty

November 1 – December 21, 2012

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 1, 6–8 pm

Contact:

Bo Joseph or Allison Stone Stabile

Tel. 212.987.4997

e-mail: bo@allanstonegallery.com

Irreverent, wry & self-referential pop culture works by this Funk Art co-founder

The **Allan Stone Gallery** is pleased to present **Robert Arneson: *Playing Dirty*, November 1-December 21, 2012**, an exhibition of approximately twenty-five early ceramic sculptures and paintings by this premier Funk Artist who elevated clay as a medium and changed the definition of art. A fully illustrated catalogue will be available featuring a previously unpublished lecture by Robert Arneson and an introduction by Arneson scholar Jonathan Fineberg.

Inspired by Peter Voulkos, **Robert Arneson (1930-1992)** rejected the idea that ceramic artists can produce only utilitarian or decorative items and, in the 1960s, began creating nonfunctional clay pieces—contradicting the more formal traditions previously associated with this medium. These objects included often facetious renditions of household wares, such as the sexualized teapots, anthropomorphic trophies, and non-utilitarian pots and bricks of this exhibition. These works demonstrate his early but enduring appetite for mischievousness and self-deprecation as a means to charge “mud” with meaning, a quality that compelled Allan Stone to give Arneson his first solo exhibitions in New York in 1964 and 1969. Arneson’s scrappy vocabulary of dark humor, pop-culture, impulsiveness and self-reference quickly attracted national attention and by the early 1970s he had established himself as a leader of the Funk Art movement in ceramics. From the early works highlighted in this show and throughout his career, his propensity for breaking rules and testing boundaries distinguished Arneson as a significant Post-War artist.

In addition to anti-utilitarian themes, the clay works in **Robert Arneson: *Playing Dirty*** represent several other motifs. An expressively glazed pot from the *Alice Street* series depicts the house and studio he occupied in suburban Davis, California. *Garcia y Vega* portrays a woman on a cigar pack reaching for penises that have replaced the cigars. Several abstract works collide angular and biomorphic elements in bizarre, semi-eroticized allusions. An unglazed terra cotta “landscape-as-shoe” is another variant on a vessel. Its “lid” looks like a miniaturized dessert landscape while its interior reveals the impression of the artist’s foot, perhaps a symbolic statement about the ceramist’s journey through an often inhospitable environment.

Arneson’s edginess is also addressed in this exhibition with paintings and work on paper. *Portrait of the Artist Testing the Wind* (1968), an oversized close up of the artist’s thumb, alludes to notions of identity

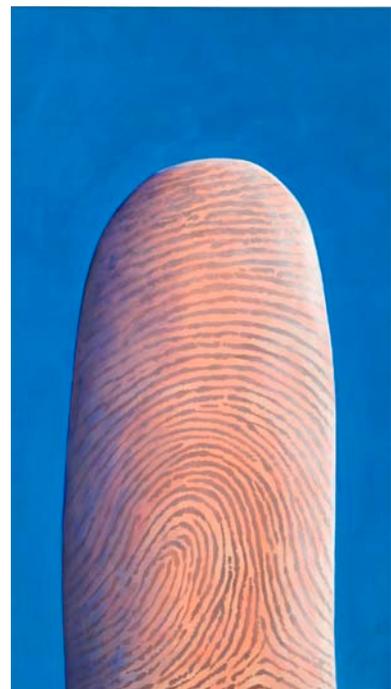
5 East 82nd Street, New York, NY 10028 **Tel. 212.987.4997 Fax 917.421.9895 Web allanstonegallery.com**

Allan Stone Gallery

and the mark of the hand in the process of working clay; another painting *Untitled (Striped Penis)* (1968) lampoons male sexuality, an image of an oversized candy-striped penis rising heroically against a blue sky. Even Allan Stone is parodied in an energetically painted mug-shot-as-portrait entitled *A. S. Suspect* (1980).

By “playing dirty,” Arneson not only advanced the medium of clay—laying the foundation for a recent resurgence of unorthodox contemporary clay sculptors—he changed the way we assign value to any artist’s choice of even the most humble medium. Arneson had a pivotal impact on furthering what is perhaps the central role of an artist: to raise questions in order to change the way we view the world.

Robert Arneson was born in Benicia, CA in 1930. In Oakland, he attended the California College of Arts and Crafts and Mills College where he received an MFA in 1958. Arneson became head of the ceramics department at the University of California at Davis in 1962 and a full professor of art in 1973. He continued to teach and produce art until his death in 1992. He received honorary doctorates from the San Francisco Art Institute and the Rhode Island School of Design, and awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the American Craft Council. Arneson’s work is included in numerous museums and public collections around the world.



Left to right, all by Robert Arneson:
Ice Cream Cone, 1965
glazed ceramic, 13 ½ x 5 ¾ x 4 ¼ in.
Allan Stone Gallery Trophy, 1965
ceramic with glaze, 21 x 13 ¼ x 6 in.
Portrait of the Artist Testing the Wind, 1968
acrylic on canvas, 80 x 45 in.

Allan Stone Gallery opened in 1960 showing works by Willem de Kooning, Cesar, Joseph Cornell, Barnett Newman, and a host of then-emerging artists like Andy Warhol, Wayne Thiebaud, Richard Estes, Robert Ryman, Eva Hesse, and John Chamberlain. The gallery, at its new location at 5 East 82nd Street, New York City, continues to present contemporary and mid-career art, interspersed with thematic exhibitions from the Allan Stone Collection, while maintaining a tradition of expertise in the Post-War New York School.

For further information or photographic material, please contact Bo Joseph or Allison Stone Stabile, tel. 212.987.4997, e-mail: bo@allanstonegallery.com
GALLERY HOURS: Wed – Sat 12 – 5 and by Appointment.

5 East 82nd Street, New York, NY 10028 **Tel.** 212.987.4997 **Fax** 917.421.9895 **Web** allanstonegallery.com