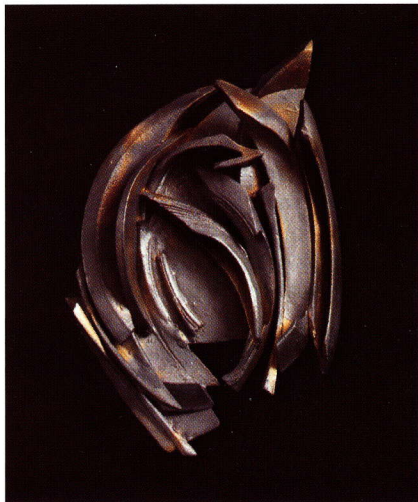


Neil Tetkowski

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Beijing

Titled "Earth Fragments," New York artist Neil Tetkowski's first solo show in China presented 24 ceramic wall reliefs, disks, and tabletop sculptures that explore the human body and the natural landscape. These small sculptures represent a shift



Neil Tetkowski, *Vortical Confluction*, 2012, clay, 24" x 16" x 3". Renmin University of China School of Arts.

from the large-scale interactive works that have previously defined the artist's practice, favoring lyrical form and innuendo over blatant messaging and epic statement. Although Tetkowski calls them "fragments," each of these abstract clay objects (all from 2012) seems complete and self-contained, the product of a lively gesture. Viewers may have sensed that the artist, who grew up on the Niagara River in upstate New York, has come full circle, returning to the playful instincts of his childhood.

Throughout the show, motifs of land and water were in constant juxtaposition—as with *Earthen Canoe* and *Atoll*, for example, which suggest bits of earth adrift in a larger, fluid body. Tetkowski also demonstrated his interest in topography in works such as *Sliced Mesa*, whose bundled red slivers of clay recall the texture, color, and form of mesas in the American Southwest.

Varying his surfaces with bronze glaze and a sophisticated ancient burnishing technique known as *terra sigillata*, the artist often evokes conflict between the natural landscape and human industry. At first glance, *Metallic Bait* feels viscerally human, but its surface insinuates smelted ore. *Vortical Confluction* and *Alluvial Flexure*, in spite of their intellectually abstract titles, are tactile and sensuous, suggesting an uneasy combination between wet, pulsating human flesh, industrial gears, and liquid steel.

—Stacey Duff