

**Outer Heaven:
Hamtramck Ceramck
at No Place Gallery**

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Hamtramck Ceramck is an artist collective and curatorial project that was established in 2015. Their studio is within Portage Garage, a re-purposed auto shop on Lumpkin and Norwalk street in Hamtramck, Michigan; Portage Garage is also home to Portage Garage Sounds, a Hamtramck based record label.

Braden Baer, Amber Codiñera Locke and Benjamin Kenjiro Saginaw are the central components of Hamtramck Ceramck at the moment, however throughout the years, this collective has included and worked with a variety of creatives, either through their studio practice or through curated exhibitions. Their approach to exhibiting their own studio work fluctuates between formal white-wall gallery style installations and more interactive utilitarian methods; this fluid nature of exhibition making is necessary to accommodate for the wide range of work they produce. While the events that utilize the more functional nature of their work include serving as dishes and utensils for *Giovanni's Family Style*, an artist restaurant project with food by Chloe Seibert, the more fine-art pieces they produce utilize the history of art installation while also twisting and inventing new ways to put art on display within the white cube exhibition space.

The work presented in their most recent exhibition *Outer Heaven* at No Place Gallery in Columbus, Ohio holds a sense of stoicism above their previous exhibitions.



Outer Heaven Hamtramck Ceramck at No Place Gallery, Columbus Ohio



Untitled (My Name is Mud)
Bucket, Glazed Ceramic, Gravel, Wet Clay Mixture, Weeds

The visitor is first greeted by a bucket covered in and holding very wet clay, resembling a swamp with a ceramic creature immersed, looking very comfortable, actually. The dirty, earthy quality of this initial piece challenges what would traditionally be expected as a work of *high art*; the textures and materials present a stark contrast to the sterilization that the white cube has inherited throughout history. *Untitled (My Name is Mud)* sets a tone for the other works right off the bat, however, the tone flips back and forth when consuming the rest of the show. Spending time with the work can allow one to become familiar with its charm; it is just as unassuming as it is unapologetic.

It somehow brings up the concept of grounding, the idea that walking barefoot in the grass or laying on the ground helps with immune defense and healthy living. Perhaps *Untitled (My Name is Mud)* is meant to serve as a type of self-portrait of the collective...This piece, as well as some other pieces in the show, seem to humor an effort of escapism, utilizing the habits and trends that spur from our tendencies to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities, through seeking entertainment or engaging in fantasy. Other works in the show that also function similarly include paintings *Maggie*, *Spice World* and *Untitled (Night Shade)*.



Untitled (My Name is Mud) detail



Maggie Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame



Untitled (Night Shade) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame



Untitled (-toad belle e-) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame

The show features nine framed paintings (glaze on fired clay) and four sculptural assemblages; all of these works were made in 2020. The glaze paintings on clay slab are relatively new to their practice, only recently being debuted in the online Detroit based exhibition *Art Mile* that took place in July-August of this year. This technique has allowed for greater exploration of image making that compliments the other works, providing the opportunity to reflect their ideas in a 2D, window-like form. Those who understand the complexities and limitations involved with the process of glazing ceramics may also appreciate the attention to detail and relative accuracy with which these were painted.



Frame Untitled (Outer Heaven)
Evinrude Outboard Motor, Steel, Wood, Glazed Ceramic, British Two Pence



Outer Heaven

As a body of work, the images portrayed through the paintings collectively reflect a dynamic relative to meme culture, which has been a persistent trait of Hamtramck Ceramck since the collective's origin. The seemingly random nature of these curated images touch on the fluidity of contemporary relations as they exist in the act of endlessly scrolling, influenced by an algorithm of a left-leaning millennial demographic. This coexistence of humor, confusion and sadness is also carried through with the sculptural works.



Spice World Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame



Untitled (Windsor) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame

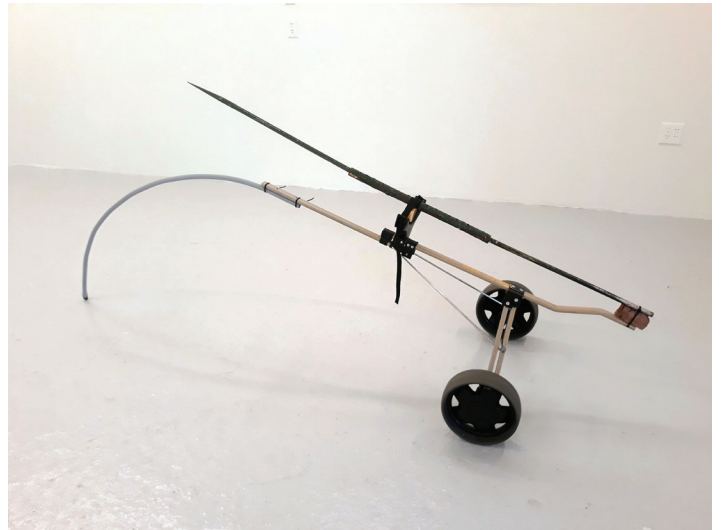


Untitled (Fly on Adderall) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame



Untitled (Metamorphosis and the Papillon) Chair, Cement Pumpkin, Glazed Ceramic, Cotton Batting, Horse Hair, Dirt, Wire, Raw Stoneware, Rocks

The complexity of the works presented, particularly the sculptural assemblages *Untitled (Outer Heaven)*, *Untitled (Metamorphosis and the Papillon)* and *Untitled (Glen's Caddy)* summon a curious intrigue; like a riddle or a puzzle, each individual detail is just as important as the next. Initially, each assumes a familiar form, a typical boat motor being held upright by a stand, random old items piled on a chair in the attic or other forgotten space, a spear...on wheels...the poetry comes from studying the relationships of the details.



Untitled (Glen's Caddy) Golf Caddy, Copper Lightning Rod, Ceramic Flute, Stone Melon, British Two Pence, Conduit, Ceramic

Like Highlights' Hidden Pictures, illusion seems to be an important aspect of the sculptures; what is assumed to be one thing from afar becomes something completely unrelated up close. Even when you notice that it is a melon slice that is being used to prop up the lightning rod, you don't truly realize that the slice is carved stone until you read the materials list included on the shows' information page.



Untitled (Glen's Caddy) Detail



Untitled (Outer Heaven) detail

The tactic of assemblage adopted here functions aesthetically as well as metaphorically; whether intentionally or unintentionally, they encourage you to look at and think about the details, things are not as they seem. When looking closely, one will also notice the British Pence used to prop up elements of *Untitled (Outer Heaven)* and *Untitled (Glen's Caddy)*.



Untitled (43) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame



Untitled (Commercial Enforcement) Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame

All but 2 of the works are titled “Untitled” followed by a qualifying tag, like *Untitled (Outer Heaven)*, *Untitled (Metamorphosis and the Papillon)*, etc. As a viewer of the work, it may be worth questioning the intention of this move when deconstructing the show. Throughout art history, it has been a very common tactic to use the title “Untitled” to leave the interpretation of the work open ended, however, in that case, why use the qualifier? In regards to the work here, the qualifying tags seem to serve as more than just a way for the works to be effectively identified during documentation; they seem to have been thought about and generated carefully to provide an entrance into the piece. They do what a “title” would do...so I am left wondering then whether including “Untitled” in the titles so often in this show is an

act of humility? An attempt at ambiguity? An avoidance to assume a particular position? Or is it just used because it's been used because it's been used?..It does provide breathing room though...as if...instead of the title being spoken in an audible tone...it's a whisper...¹

the city of Detroit, but also throughout the country including The Real Tinsel in Milwaukee, WI, The Pit in Los Angeles, CA, Interstate Projects in NYC, Frontera in Mexico City, MX, Reyes Project's Inaugural NADA Presentation in Miami Beach, FL, and Bahamas Biennale in Mukwonago, WI.



Untitled (Anonymous) – Glazed Ceramic and Artist Frame

The level of careful intention behind the decision making in this body of work assumes a calm confidence while sustaining an awareness of conversations that reach outside of their local Detroit/Hamtramck social and creative sphere. It has been common for Hamtramck Ceramck to remain relevant in their approach to object and image making as they continue to collaborate and exhibit with artists and spaces within



Outer Heaven

As a guest collaborator to *Outer Heaven* Hamtramck Ceramck incorporated a text by MARCUSMARCUS, which, in a way, could serve as a statement for the show.

*I VENTURE TO SAY
THAT YOU HAVE NOT KNOWN HEAVEN
BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IT IS OUTSIDE
OF YOURSELF*

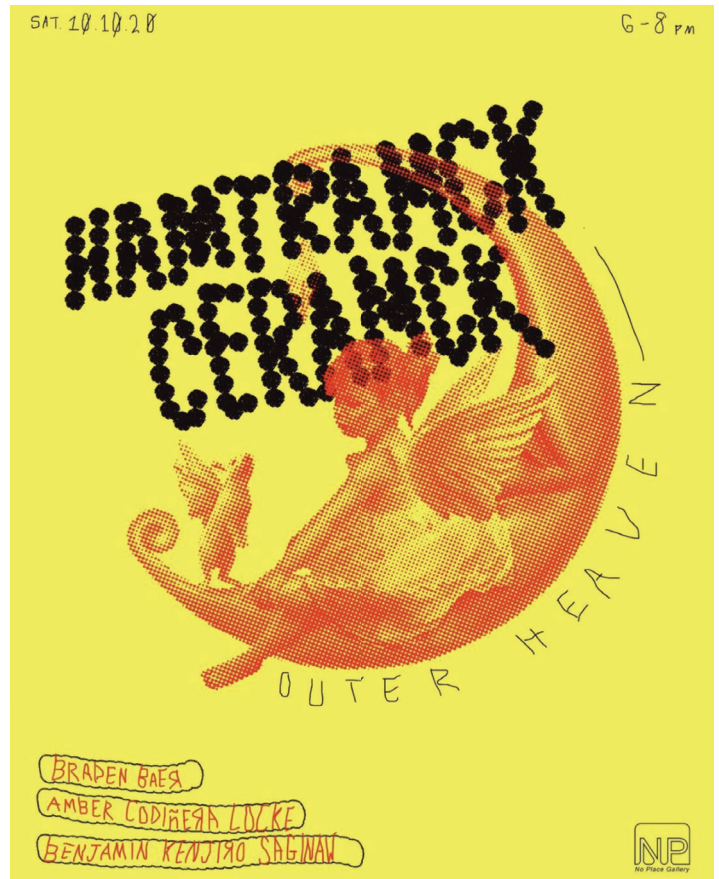
or perhaps believe it is a moment of bliss
with which ignorance is a close neighbor
There's nothing under the sun
yet your ignorance still baffles me.
you still take time
the fleeting kind
you still my mind
...deafening vibes.

Once the bud of exploration begins to open
will you breathe heavy laborious breath
wishing it to look like others
will you watch it open in daylight
resting at midnight as you smoke, drink,
parade, and talk about it.
You have the answer but you assume it is
the all-knowing kind.
Fair, for a know-it-all
Unfit for us others.

In the authority that takes place
in your heart
are you as afraid of yourself
as you are authority in uniform.
what begs someone to do their job
even though no one likes them from
distance, in uniform.
the line between doing your job and doing
the most
is barely fine.
However when those lines are blended with
denial and absence of true self
serpent-like mating balls of tension and
angst are bound to stop intrinsic motion.

Can you believe in the day though you
only wake for night
will you wake for daylight
the way you do for the restroom
specific, purposeful,
erect, pulsating, needing to release
excess in order to be at peace with
internal comfort.
upon returning to bed, are you
appreciative, aware, open, and blank.

-MARCUSMARCUS



Outer Heaven - Hamtramck Ceramck at No Place Gallery, 2020.
Image Courtesy of Hamtramck Ceramck

You can learn more about the Hamtramck Ceramck here:
<https://www.hamtramckceramck.com/>

MARCUSMARCUS: <https://marcus-marcus.com/>

No Place Gallery here: <https://noplacegallery.com/>

1 Kelsey Ables, "Why Are So Many Artworks Untitled?" Artsy.net, July 4, 2019, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-artworks-untitled#:~:text=Gonzalez%2DTorres%20created%20his%20own,his%20thoughts%20behind%20a%20work.>