



Waste Nothing: Jonathan Mess at Two Point Gallery

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When the economy crashes and burns, perhaps no other venture gets hit the hardest than that of an artist. With no "[New Deal](#)" in sight, the Twenty-first century art maker must get, well, creative when it comes to materials and process. Is there an example of such work here in Portland? Yes, there is.

For artist, [Jonathan Mess](#), an interest in geology, geography, and land produced his most recent show, "Landfills and By-Products," featured at the newly opened [Two Point Gallery](#). The "Landfills" are various sized chunks of recycled clay, slip, stains, and glazes, mixed and poured in sections inside cardboard boxes. These masses of recycled clay studio waste are intriguingly obtrusive objects, yet seem like Diorama-esque, scaled down cross-sections of an anthropological dig. Parts of the fired glaze oozes like lava out of the subterranean layers. Each section suggests a timeline: Triassic, Paleozoic, Mesozoic. Each "Landfill" is a little slice of a geologist's heaven. There are several of such pieces in the gallery space, stacked high on shelves, and some more tile-like pieces hang on the walls, as if they were a bird's eye view of a topographical map. Specks and flecks of clay resembled a tree or a fence post, glaze and slip meander along like a river or a road. It makes sense; earth begets earth.



Jonathan Mess, "By Products," 2009 Courtesy of Two Point Gallery

Along a long section of the gallery wall, outstretched objects assembled so the color reacts to the piece next to it hang. At first they look like more tiles, but upon closer examination it is understood what these pieces are made from. They are indeed the by-products of Mess's "Landfill" making process. The cardboard boxes stained with glaze, stuck with clay pieces that would not detached pose a striking resemblance to cave paintings. It is amazing how something so ordinary can suddenly look so beautiful.

Mess's process of incorporating a "low-waste system of making by using recycled clays, found cardboard, and even mixing the clay that falls to the floor back into my system," brings the phrase "waste not, want not" to a whole new level. The aesthetics of recycled items has been weaving in and out of the avant-garde for decades, but in light of the economic down-turn and concerns of cataclysmic environmental destruction, perhaps we will see a more steady wave of reduce, reuse, recycle.

For more info: Please visit, www.twopointgallery.com or www.artmess.net.

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