

# SEANKELLY

Richard Janku, Laura. "Nathan Mabry's Jackin', Stackin', Crackin' Sculpture," *ArtInfo*, June 12, 2007.

## BLOUINARTINFO

### Nathan Mabry's Jackin', Stackin', Crackin' Sculpture



*Conversation Piece (Jackin', Stackin' and Crackin')* (studio shot of piece in progress)  
Nathan Mabry

"I use compassionate irreverence and conceptualism to combine different cultural effigies into my own metaphors," says young artist Nathan Mabry, standing in his studio next to his brand new sculpture, *Conversation Piece (Jackin', Stackin', and Crackin')*, which will go on view at Los Angeles's Cherrydelosreyes Gallery on Nov. 4.

Like a latter-day Brancusi, 27-year-old Mabry melds ritual objects with archformalism. To be precise, he uses clay to fashion outsized versions of pre-Columbian ceremonial vessels, then places these atop elements based on artworks by Minimalist masters such as Sol LeWitt and Tony Smith. From this description, his sculptures may sound like dissonant clashes of cultures, but they wind up being surprisingly elegant and superbly resolved.

These days Mabry, who lives and works in L.A., and whose work was included in the widely praised exhibition *Thing: New Sculpture from Los Angeles* at the Hammer Museum earlier this year, is adding an L.A.-specific twist to his work, riffing on the sculptures of L.A. fetishist John McCracken, while also further exploring his own interest in today's youth culture.

*Conversation Piece* consists of a large terra cotta vessel in the shape of a llama's head that rests on glossy candy colored cubes inspired by McCracken's sculptures. Mabry is playing with classic binary oppositions—handmade versus industrially fabricated; representational versus abstract; ancient versus contemporary—but he updates them with a splash of the latest street styles.



Nathan Mabry

For instance, the llama's teeth are made from white gold embedded with crystals that spell out the word P-E-A-C-E, a nod to the custom-made, gold teeth sported by hip hoppers. Not that bling is anything new, Mabry seems to be reminding us—the Incas were into gold teeth, too. And the artist is quick to note that the figure of the llama also draws on camel and rams' head vessels from Mesopotamia, relating it to the current Middle East conflict.

Mabry's decision to recreate pre-Columbian pottery—Mochi pottery to be exact—is not insignificant. He is recalling a once-great civilization, and juxtaposing it with our present-day surroundings. Like a skilled DJ, he spins quite a few tracks, and creates a new whole. Historical, anthropological, and yet funky and fresh, Mabry's sculptures are both modest monuments and cautionary tales.

Nathan Mabry's sculpture *Conversation Piece (Jackin', Stackin', and Crackin')* is currently on view at Cherrydelosreyes in a two person exhibition with Jeremy Shaw, from Nov. 4 to Dec. 11.

*All images courtesy of Cherrydelosreys, Los Angeles, CA*