

My name is Ray Chen. Thank you very much for being with us with this panel. Today, I would like to share my ongoing thinking process of re-examining and studying advanced contexts, as well as, the conceptual and contemporary artistic aspects, and material with my self-expression that reflect new ways to reshape physical expressions, redefine modernism and elevate its visual language in the context and the subject of the Domestic Mysteries.

Twenty First Century thinking in ceramics can broadly exist and be cultivated through initiative, critical thinking and efforts that experience and challenge our intellectual and creative process. Post-Modernism reflects a time of great progress, and “progress” is an important metaphor for change. Change is seen not as a linear progression, but as a series of networks and flows, connections and reconnections that, because they are always forming and reforming, never have time to solidify. In contemporary art, material is a concept that also speaks as a part of the representational context. Therefore, material, creativity and self-expression have become the main focus as my ongoing process of investigation and research of my work-“Mother and Child”.

Clay, as a material, has the boundless power to cross time, connect history and challenge the intellectual process. Reflective of this changing dynamic, contemporary and post-modern ceramics continues to explore its role and challenge perceived constraints of the media. Its receptivity to the possibilities of the unexpected and its response to the world aesthetically and intellectually evidence our motivation and vision in our creative process.

To be capable is to open the restless mind to many wonders. We discuss and challenge our limitations and objects. We examine viewpoints, place in time, changes, and improvements as an opportunity to reach the broadest and most positive definition of visual expression and quality. We overturn, modify and question our way of seeing and comprehending the contexts of visible and invisible connections that symbolize visual languages, as well as, expose the symbolic, philosophical vision and aesthetic force, as we push the artistic tradition far into the future with possibilities and potential. Questioning is the only constant for learning to wonder about, as well as, to wonder at art.

As a Chinese-American, I learn and grow from a process of time, culture, history, and value. Eastern culture and my family education have shaped my (early) life and influenced my life... to be humble, polite and patient, preserve harmony but to be sensitive. I have been learning and growing to become who I am through experiencing the process of time and culture, and maintaining a strong sense of history and values. Process speaks to historical or cultural significance because it is the testimony to cultural continuity, change, possibility, and potential that is part of the motivation and vision in my creative process.

Henry Moore says, Sculpture for me, must have life in it. By creating a vitality and life within a form and meaning is to keep primitive power with humanist content. My work, “Mother and Child”, moves from tradition to contemporary, from realistic emotional expression to abstract presentation, from East to West.

For the last several years, I have addressed in my work the central relationship between my mother and myself. Twenty years ago, my mother fell ill to Parkinson's disease. As the only son in my family and in accord with the tradition of Chinese culture, it became my role to take full responsibility for her and be strong. I encouraged her with love and warmth; I kissed her and I told her that I loved her. May 7th, 2003, a day before mother's day, my mother peacefully left with the years of her challenges of the

illness of Parkinson. Her love has been around as always and she has more to offer. The bond is strong and deeply connected in my work of the "Mother and Child" series.

My mother was a traditional, open minded, and a contemporary Eastern woman. She spent her whole life taking care of her children and family, and so it was a family tragedy for us when she suffered with Parkinson's. The impact of this on me has been tremendous, and my work has become an emotional expression of my relationship with my mother.

My mother's influence on me was constant. Her career as an opera singer and later an Ikebana flower arrangement teacher gave depth to my musical understanding as well as an introduction to the arts. At age 22, I began to study flower arrangement with my mother, a practice which helps me to think about space and visual objects from all perspectives.

"Mother and Child" is a connection between my mother and me over space and distance. It is a measurement in feelings through my own personal experience, presenting movement, energy, love, relationship, honesty, and integrity. The exploration of form, space and lines, has become an outer language to embody my inner feelings through this experience. I value form and space as a relationship between internal and external; one cannot exist without the other. Form and space distinguish interpersonal relationships. The objective is to compose a portrait that is charged with rich emotional and spiritual vision. The energy comes from the point where the pieces touch. The composition of gestural abstract forms is effected strongly by the spaces between forms. Also, I believe the content of my sculpture to be an emotional connection between form and material. It also expresses crossed boundaries between Eastern and Western culture and aesthetics-as well as the physical distance between my mother and myself. I always tell and encourage my students and myself, to create experiences and to work with challenges; to remain true to oneself, any honest mark is potential.

From a Domestic Mysteries point of view to the contemporary eyewitness, the material and conceptions are the reproduction of our own interpretation. Meaning is the result of understanding. The message is not only present in images but also reflects the truthfulness of our own experience. The consistent characteristics of love purify the power of life and my personal approach to engage relationships and connections with sensibility and understanding. "Mother and Child" provides me with a source of inspiration to investigate sculptural form and my mother's life. Clay and fire transcend the value of humility and express the texture of emotions. Mother and Child is a timeless statement of maternal love.

In conclusion, I believe that ceramics and its expression of context characterizes every reason to extend ceramic's role (in the world) through providing new avenues of critical thinking, initiative, cultural significance, and technological innovations. I explore clay instinctively and am motivated by its inviting and responsive sensory qualities. Metamorphosis, a kind of trial, is the beginning of a rebirth that allows me to move fluidly across the material of clay and its methods to reach my deepest touch of the "Mother and Child" series. It gives me a new understanding about ceramic materials; it also challenges my boundaries, creative expression, material applications, skill, and connections with the rich history of ceramics and artistic movements. It provides a new vitality within the broader body of ceramic art and time, paramount as the future begins.