

# Shaun Hayes

## *TRASHED*

23 September - 16 October 2021

Stanley Street gallery  
SYDNEY





# Shaun Hayes

Shaun Hayes is a ceramic artist who investigates the relationship between throwaway objects and their ability to instil a sense of reflection on memory, creating a deeply nostalgic and sometimes humorous representation of time and place.

Through methods of repetition, rearranging and joining of cast objects paired with a tonal colour palette, Hayes's sculptures are reminiscent of fantastical and comical imagery whilst also highlighting the tensions of growing up in conversation with existing in a wasteful, thoughtless consumerist society.

Hayes received a Bachelor of Arts (Visual), with Honours majoring in Ceramics from the Australian National University School of Art in 2013. He was awarded an artist residency at Strathnairn Arts in July of 2014 and is still currently producing work there. His trips to Jingdezhen China in 2011 and 2013 continues to be an influence.

Shaun is represented by Stanley Street Gallery and was selected to represent them at the Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks Sydney in September 2018.

Most recently Shaun was selected as a finalist in the 2020/2021 Woollahra Small Sculpture prize.

# A Material Play on Waste

In 1957 Roland Barthes asserted plastic to be something more than just a substance or material, but an idea of transformative alchemy. Democratic in its use, ubiquitous and infinite in its plurality, plastic is a transmutation of nature; from matter to thing, to object, to fabric, the utensil, the telephone, the chair, the rhinestone, the toothbrush, the 3D printed weapon.

Everywhere and never ending in its potential, the material scope of plastic gives measure to a certain power. Artificial and synthetic, plastic is a miracle of development, its shapeshifting malleability a reflection of human expansion and domination over nature. There is a spectacle of plasticity, a euphoric triumph in our material mastery, a freedom to replicate whatever we want, however we want it.

And what of immortality? What does it mean to outlive your use? To outlive the natural world? Disposable. In its ability to be anything and everything, plastic is also meaningless. For Barthes, “what best reveals plastic for what it is, is the sound it gives, at once hollow and flat; its noise is its undoing”. Plastic is the material alchemy of capitalist desire. Ravenous and hollow, yet filled with so much potential.

Plastic doesn't care about time. Disposable. Neither does ceramic. Like plastic, ceramic material are also dependent on their function. A handle broken or plate chipped will send an object to the bin. Trash. What does it mean to be both ephemeral and long lasting?

**Shaun Hayes**

Iconic

2021

Glazed Midfire ceramic

37 x 15 x 15 cm

**\$470**

Enquire





**Shaun Hayes**  
Take Me Out  
2021  
Glazed Midfire ceramic  
56 x 36 x 36cm

**\$1,460**

Enquire

In his latest exhibition *'Trashed'*, Shaun Hayes investigates the material conversations of waste. How has disposability translated into the materiality of the objects around us? Interested in the feelings and memory these throwaway objects evoke, Hayes comically uses trash to build vessels of Western cultural heritage. Our garbage becoming a biographic assemblage of certain value systems. The unimportant plastic bottle, the takeaway container and toothpaste ironically put on a pedestal, vitrified, forever set in stone. Almost sarcastically, the works are critiques of how material value is manufactured. But in the environment it does not matter, material hierarchy does not exist, and both refuse to break down and return to the earth. *'Trashed'* is tongue and cheek; what are the impacts of consumerism on the environment? Do we even care?

In so many ways, we have become so detached from the impact we have on the environment that we don't even know what it means to throwaway a plastic bottle. According to Hayes, we've created

systems to erase the true meaning of the everyday object on the natural world. The weightlessness of the plastic bottle makes it easy to throwaway. We've separated ourselves to the extent that we don't feel anything when we put it in the bin.

Moving beyond written language, the works presented in *'Trashed'* are a material play on ideas of waste, sustainability and disposability. Who better to have the conversation with plastic than ceramic? Here, there is a deep knowledge of immortality and material alchemy. Magical transformation through processes of earth, water and fire are nothing more than familiar routine for ceramic. Who else can understand the malleability of plastic than the plasticity of clay? Living beyond the natural world, plastic and ceramic share a future together. Probably one without us.

For Hayes, there is a misconception that ceramic is a natural material and therefore better for the environment than plastic. It is no secret that converting clay into ceramic emits greenhouse gases.



**Shaun Hayes**

Canned

2021

Glazed Midfire ceramic

47 x 22 x 22 cm

Edition 1/5

**\$970**

Enquire



This process uses huge amounts of resources and energy, which for Hayes and many other ceramic artists, contends with the image of the 'sustainable potter'. Perhaps we need to approach notions of sustainability more carefully.

To be sustainable on this earth is complex, often conflated with ideas of 'natural' and 'organic'. If anything, ceramic practices highlight that just because it comes from the earth doesn't necessarily mean it is good for it. These material musings about ceramics invoke questions of scarcity. As we dig deeper into the earth, new geologies and clay bodies emerge. This can be frustrating to the individual ceramic practice, for example one day your favourite clay body has been slightly altered or is out of stock, which may require adjustments to the chemical compositions of glaze recipes, however it also points to another conclusion of extractive processes - clay pits are exhaustive. Around the world, clay pits are being used up. Anecdotally, a ceramicist told me that deposits of Limoges, the most expensive

white porcelain body from France had dried up locally and today the company sources their 'Limoges' porcelain from a New Zealand clay pit. Indeed, when your supplier has run out of stock, it can be in more ways than one.

Nevertheless the labor processes and scale of the individual ceramic artist and the industrialist have different responsibility to environmental degradation and global warming. Yet one cannot help but wonder what 'sustainability' means within extractive processes, even for the individual.

How do we create relationships to objects and materials and what does that mean for the environment? Assembled with dedicated precision, the ceramic work of Shaun Hayes plays with the psychological evocation of material waste through assemblage and colour. Bright and flashy the synthetic red, yellow and blue distort the meaning of the objects they adorn. They pop, they are fun and playful to the eye, I want to have it, buy it, own it.



**Shaun Hayes**  
Remember to Flush  
2021  
Glazed Midfire ceramic  
32 x 10 x 10 cm

**Sold**

Enquire

Staring at a frozen toilet cleaner confidently sitting on a gold plinth, the nozzle proudly uncapped, I think about how disposability translates materially. Carefully considered, each object has been transformed magically through the processes of water, fire air and the intention of the artist. Waste. The coffee cup lid, the toothbrush, the cue tip, small thoughtless conveniences of our comfortable lives. Trash. I try to conjure the image of a garbage tip, but I don't think I have ever visited one. I can see the empty soap dispenser, the razor, or the coke bottle floating discarded on the banks of the Cooks River (Goolay'yari). Disposable. I think of the river, of nature, maybe for the first time that day.

The union of skill, intuition, experimentation and imagination that is the becoming of Hayes work is a clear departure from the mass-production of the single-use disposable that we encounter in the everyday. The connection to material here is personal and philosophical. Hayes's art practice is the embodiment of plastic memory discerning consumerist design

history upon each surface and posing questions of material immortality. It captures the disregarded object, caressing it before it is taken to the tip, holding it up to us with pride. As we are drawn in closer, seduced by the bright colour and squinting at the flat matte surface, a mirror appears. Who do you see?

**Claire de Carteret**  
Writer & Curator

*I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land upon which this text was researched and written. I pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty never ceded.*

**References:**

Mike Hall, "Dissonance and Decarbonisation", The Journal of Australian Ceramics, April 2020

Nick Waterlow, 'Preface', The Somatic Object, 1997

Petra Lange-Berndt, 'How to be Complicit with Materials', Materiality, MIT press, 2015

Roland Barthes, "Plastic," Myths, 1957





**Shaun Hayes**  
Stay Hydrated  
2021  
Glazed Midfire ceramic  
56 x 36 x 36 cm

**\$1,460**

Enquire

**Shaun Hayes**

You're So Vain

2021

Glazed Midfire ceramic

56 x 36 x 36 cm

**\$1,460**

Enquire





**Shaun Hayes**  
Quit While Your Ahead  
2021  
Glazed Midfire ceramic  
53 x 19 x 19 cm

**\$950**

Enquire



ARTISAN 506  
PLATE WITH POTTER

# E-Catalogue

Shaun Hayes is represented by Stanley Street Gallery

Photography Bryna Bamberry

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