

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Weed Pots, an exhibition of ceramic vessels by Doyle Lane. Curated by artist Ricky Swallow, the show will feature more than five dozen examples of Lane's iconic, small-scale weed pots made between the late 1950s and late 1970s, on loan from collections throughout California, including the California African American Museum. Weed Pots will be on view at the gallery from July 22 through August 29, 2020. David Kordansky Gallery is currently open by private appointment only. Virtual visits are available.

Doyle Lane (b. 1925, New Orleans; d. 2002, Los Angeles) is a significant, if underknown, voice in West Coast ceramic sculpture. His delicate vases and rigorous wall murals are expressions of a masterful command of traditional techniques; an innovative, tactile approach to glazing; and a quietly visionary understanding of geometry and three-dimensional form. He worked from a home studio in the El Sereno district of Los Angeles for the majority of his career, producing highly focused, exquisitely proportioned objects sought after by many architects and designers throughout the region. Very much a mid-century "production potter," Lane would sell his pots directly to loyal collectors while also pursuing large-scale architectural commissions. As a Black artist, he exhibited at notable Los Angeles galleries founded during the Civil Rights and Black Arts movements, including Ankrum Gallery and Brockman Gallery.

The weed pots—so named because they were designed to hold individual sprigs and dried flowers—were among his most consistent sites of experimentation. In a 2014 essay on Lane's work, Swallow describes them as "jewels of California modernism [that] are most credibly understood and appreciated when viewed in groupings, which is how Doyle conceived and marketed them in both gallery presentations and architectural commissions. In this context, one can see the subtle shifts in scale and form of the pots, some plump and spherical with tiny collared throats, some wider—more UFO-like (think Nelson lamp) with flattened openings just large enough to support a single twig. This combined with the matte-satin glazed surfaces, varying in color and activity, creates a real rhythm in the groupings and gives one an abridged glimpse into the working nature and diversity of Lane's talents."

That Lane was able to maintain a long career and support himself by selling his art, without teaching or pursuing another profession, was itself a notable achievement, especially since opportunities were scarce in worlds of art and design that privileged the work of white artists. Circumstance and temperament alike seemed to inform his practical working philosophy. Rather than trying to garner attention with bombastic gestures, Lane took matters into his own hands by concentrating on the evolution of his technique and aesthetic intuition.

In an interview with artist Stanley Wilson, published as part of a feature entitled "Black Artists of Los Angeles" that appeared in a 1981 issue of Studio Potter magazine and was introduced by artist John Outterbridge, Lane observed: "When you're seeking fame, you force yourself to try and become clever and to be better than somebody else, which can be a very unhealthy situation there. I think the best way to seek fame is not to seek it, and to do just what you have to do—or can do—and let it go at that. To be spiritual is to be balanced."

The results of this way of thinking—really a way of life conditioned by both internal drives and external constraints—are objects whose small scale and subtlety are disarming. Each weed pot is a self-contained visual and tactile universe that nonetheless opens possibilities for further, and seemingly limitless, variation. As

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Swallow indicates, this lends the work a serial quality that inspired aficionados to seek out multiple examples, and there is evidence that Lane conceived of and installed his pots with this kind of multiplicity in mind. Like an expansive, plant-like organism consisting of many small parts, they can also be read as individual, differentiated elements that pertain to a single collective entity.

Weed Pots provides a rare window into the oeuvre of a figure whose contributions to the cultural landscape of Southern California—and beyond—continue to be fully appreciated. By remaining true to the ancient and evergreen parameters of the pot, and by condensing his energies with laser-like focus, Lane was able to realize a humane, accessible sort of grandeur that is rare at any scale, in any context, and at any moment in time.

Doyle Lane has been the subject of solo exhibitions at The Landing at Reform Gallery, Los Angeles (2014); Los Angeles City College Art Gallery (1970); Brockman Gallery, Los Angeles (1968); and Ankrum Gallery, Los Angeles (1967–1968). A major mural is on long-term view at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California. His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including California Design, 1930–1965: Living in A Modern Way, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2012); California Black Craftsman, Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, California (1970); Objects: USA, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C (1970); and several iterations of the California Design shows at the Pasadena Art Museum, California (1958-69). Lane's work is included in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Oakland Museum of California; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and California African American Museum, Los Angeles, which holds his archives.

In addition to his work as an artist, Ricky Swallow has written and curated exhibitions about modern and contemporary West Coast ceramics, including the 2013 group exhibition GRAPEVINE~ at David Kordansky Gallery.