

art & architecture

Flavoring order with chaos

Tsehai Johnson is usually a paragon of order, making ceramic sculpture that is all about an overlay of regularity on an uneasy base of subversion.

Sexually charged objects, psychologically askew domestic tools, beautifully glazed pieces that link together to suggest wallpaper — Johnson introduces the conceptual into her finely crafted work in porcelain.

For “Disorderly,” though, she has ventured into somewhat new territory, a place where the orderly begins to fray in all the right ways.

In this assemblage of work at Plus Gallery, Johnson includes a wall work (*Field #11*) reminiscent of others that have the strict rhythms and boundaries of the past. But in the installation *Exploding Carpet*, all bets are off, and patterning has shifted.

Arranged on the floor with suggested borders that maintain their regularity, at its center *Carpet* appears to fly apart. On the bottom are highly glazed and irregular white porcelain forms that inspire the thought that the carpet has mutinied; suspended above are more active shapes that have taken flight.

It recalls the motion studies in photography of Harold Edgerton, except here the subject is not a drop of milk or golf swing but a pattern in revolt.

Johnson has surrounded *Exploding Carpet* with a quartet of scone-like works (*Wall Shift #1* through *#4*) in colors such as dark gray, orange and a vivid green — a huge step away from her usual white-white-pale-pastel spectrum. Too, these pieces exhibit aspects that belie perfection.

Overall, “Disorderly” corrals work that is all about reconciling regularity with spontaneity.

Sharing the same space is Andy Miller’s “Flat and Empty,” a selection of stitched vinyl objects arranged in such a way that they appear to mirror Johnson’s work.

Here, the result is a reflection on material and form, blobby, floating pieces that offer an



Mary Voelz Chandler

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◀ **John Hull's 2008 pencil and ink on paper *You Woke Up My Neighborhood* and other works explore the gray area of human relationships.**

amorphous view of amoebic shapes. They demonstrate Miller’s interest in taking something plain and pushing it to the limit — though in this instance, that limit isn’t too far.

To this intersection of the conceptual and the sculptural, Plus has added a plus: new work by John Hull in the back viewing area.

Hull, a consummate painter and respected

professor at the University of Colorado at Denver, moved to South Carolina a few years ago, where he is now professor of painting and department chairman at the College of Charleston.

He is still, however, exploring the gray area of human relationships, the confluence of love and violence. That is especially true in *Mans*

Disorderly

■ **What:** New work in porcelain by Tsehai Johnson, with “Flat and Empty,” vinyl works by Andy Miller, and “The Most Beautiful Woman in Town and Other Stories,” drawings and paintings by John Hull

■ **Where and when:** Plus Gallery, 2350 Lawrence St.; through Aug. 23

■ **Of note:** Artists’ talk, 6 p.m. Aug. 22

■ **Information:** 303-296-0927; plusgallery.com

◀ **Tsehai Johnson's 2008 porcelain *Exploding Carpet*, with *Wall Shift #1 (Green)* and *Wall Shift #2 (Orange)* in the background**

Adventure, a grid of 63 small acrylic-panel paintings that alternate black-and-white views of action in a boxing ring with depictions in muted colors of physically engaged couples. *Adventure* has the quick-cut sense of film and the narrative impact inherent in all of Hull’s work, whether telling the stories of petty criminals or of soldiers.

That sense of something going on below the surface continues in Hull’s series of tiny pencil and ink drawings “The Most Beautiful Woman in Town and Other Stories.”

Turning to short stories by Charles Bukowski for an artistic prompt, Hull again presents couples caught in the mire of communication. With titles such as *Wish You Were Her* and *You Woke Up My Neighborhood*, these deftly rendered encounters are the stuff of life — for better or for worse.

Hull was in town recently to get married, and it’s good that he’s facing “better,” while exhibiting work that recognizes the human condition.

It’s a fitting send-off for this space, the final shows before Plus moves to a gallery awaiting build-out at 2500 Larimer St. As builders say, stay tuned.