

Cadiz: The Sculptural Topology of Anne Currier's Work

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Anne Currier creates modernist objects that engage—and tantalizingly evade--the vocabulary of ceramics and sculpture. Her combination of these territories, areas that have largely been separate for the last century, is intriguing.¹ In terms of materiality, surface structure, and construction these works participate in both the history of ceramics and the modernist canon. Yet Currier's recent work also resides outside these boundaries. *Cadiz* (2005) is emblematic of this new body; it offers us a geometry that is seen more often in mathematical modeling than in contemporary art. Its complexity of folded and enfolded shapes presents us with a sculptural topology that eludes easy apprehension.²

Cadiz contains shapes that we cannot conceptually predict or visually anticipate. Formally, the work speaks the language of both ceramics and sculpture. The work is dominated by a series of oblique planes punctuated by smaller spatial envelopes that emerge and wrap around the core. This plasticity evokes the material rhetoric of ceramics, yet the manner in which it molds space distinguishes it as sculpture. *Cadiz's* surface also positions the work within both fields. Its distinctive matte finish—a granular texture that absorbs the light and attracts the hand—implies both clay body and cut stone. Further, its rich, monochromatic color—applied with sponge and spray—suggests both glaze and stone. The dual-identity of this work is clearly manifested in its construction.

“Fabrication” is the word most closely approximating Currier’s technique. The artist avoids the traditional sculptural methods of modeling or carving. Rather, her pieces are cubist-inspired; they are constructed objects of conical and cylindrical shapes that are cut and assembled. However, the actual forming of the work is indebted to pottery-making. Continually throughout the fabrication process, Currier manipulates both the interior and exterior walls--her hands moving in, out, and elliptically around the object. As she progresses into a given work, Currier rotates the form repeatedly. In doing so, a complex, physical geometry unfolds.

Cadiz contains a non-Euclidian geometry of arranged shapes that defies easy observation. Viewing *Cadiz* is a startling venture. Initially, we see a triangular form rising from the ground; then, it shifts back and aligns with a diagonal plane that reverses direction away from us. As we move towards and around the piece, we view a large folded envelope of mass aggressively pushing forward, which retreats to a broad, oblique surface that then proceeds to wrap back around the form. Currier accentuates the interplay of formal elements. The edges and joints of these elements are never perpendicular to one another, but are slanted, sloping or splayed. Each constituent part then interconnects, flexes and contracts across the surface. This animation is central to our viewing. For Currier, “the shapes are the players—intersecting, extending, colliding, or passing through, over, under one another creating space.”³

There is an extraordinary mobility found in *Cadiz*. This surface movement lacks the rupture and fragmentation of Currier's earlier work; instead, *Cadiz* exhibits a sweeping, roving geometry. The broad movement across the surface reminds one of Frank Gehry's recent architectural facades that undulate in a continuous, mobile fabric.⁴ Similarly, Currier moves away from the fractured vocabulary of cubist assemblage towards a unified sculptural envelope.⁵ With *Cadiz*, we participate in a rhythmic oscillation over the surface. Our eye moves swiftly back, across, over, and around the piece. We see one view, then another, and another view--all the while remembering the previous views and trying to anticipate the next. This continual play makes *Cadiz* and its siblings deeply engaging works. Currier creates in these new pieces the sculptural experience that artist Barbara Hepworth once described as "the encircling interplay and dance . . . between the object and human sensibility."⁶

¹ The use of ceramics in sculpture drastically fell out of favor in the early 20th century due to several factors, including the critique of both mass-production and Rodin's studio practice, and the subsequent development of the "truth to materials" movement. See: Penelope Curtis, *Sculpture: 100-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 3.

² Typology, one of the most active areas of current mathematical research, is a type of transformational geometry. It has been defined as involving "the study of geometric properties that do not change when figures are deformed by bending, stretching, or molding." See: "Geometry," *World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: World Book Encyclopedia, 2005).

³ Anne Currier, "Artist Statement," 2006.

⁴ I am indebted to Rafael Moneo's recent discussion of contemporary architecture, especially his chapter on Frank Gehry. See: Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies In the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

⁵ Currier is currently embarking on a project to enhance this unification of surface and is experimenting with different clay bodies during her academic sabbatical to potentially eliminate glazing in future work. Interview with artist, June 2006.

⁶ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 158.