

Lust Collectors: Ceramic Figurines as vessels for emotional tension and contemporary reality

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Abstract

Interpreting and miniaturizing the human form in clay is a persistent human practice spanning tens of thousands of years. One of the earliest known examples, the Venus of Dolní Věstonice (c. 27,000 BCE), demonstrates both technical innovation and symbolic intent within an intimate scale. Across historical contexts, ceramic figurines have functioned as didactic tools and domestic ornaments. Their miniature scale and tactility position them at the intersection of intimacy and ideology, where material form becomes a site for encoding social values. This research frames figurine-making as a strategy through which the artist materializes and understands her socio-material reality. By embodying gender norms, morality, and national identity, the figurine renders abstract cultural systems tangible. A comparative analysis of two distinct yet interconnected moments, prehistoric clay figures and the porcelain industries of Staffordshire and Victorian England, reveals how shifts in ways of making, industrial production, and beliefs shape both form and meaning. In Victorian England, for instance, mass-produced porcelain figures

circulated domestic ideals and moral narratives, reinforcing dominant social frameworks through ornamentation and display. Drawing from these histories, this research explores how the artist's ceramic practice developed a language of form that investigates how the ceramic figurine can function. Specifically, as a vessel for voicing contemporary anxieties over how we exist in the world, how we live within our environment and our bodies themselves. Historically shaped by ideological constraint and at times mobilized for moral instruction or propaganda, the figurine remains a potent site for examining how makers internalize and materialize the pressures of their cultural moment. Through material experimentation and critical reflection, this body of work positions the contemporary ceramic object as an intimate structure through which emotional states and collective tensions are made physical.

Keywords: Ceramic figurines, materiality, ideology, embodiment, social values

Introduction

The *Venus of Dolní Věstonice* was a fired clay figurine created during the Gravettian period of the European Upper Paleolithic, constructed approximately around 27,000 BCE (Allan 2025, 42). The Agricultural Revolution had not yet occurred, and human populations across Europe lived in small, mobile, hunter-gatherer communities. The settlement at Dolní Věstonice, located in present-day Czechia, was an open-air habitation site, enclosed by a perimeter constructed from mammoth bones (“Dolní Věstonice (archaeological site)”, n.d.). This Venus figurine represents the earliest known example of humans intentionally working with clay. Excavations at the site have uncovered hundreds of additional clay objects, including zoomorphic figures and abstract forms. Intriguingly, there is little evidence that clay was used for utilitarian purposes such as storage containers or cooking vessels. This absence has led many scholars to propose that early experimentation with clay was primarily symbolic or representational rather than functional. In this context, the human and animal figurine emerges as one of the earliest artistic and conceptual uses of ceramic material. The fact that one of the first known uses of clay involved modeling the human body suggests a deeper conceptual significance. Rather than beginning as a practical technology, ceramics may have originated as a medium for expression, identity, and meaning making, reflecting an early human desire to interpret and recreate the world through material form (Meskell 2017, 32).

Of course, other mediums such as limestone and bone have been used to subtractively carve out figures during this time period, but the *Venus of Dolní Věstonice* stands apart for its additive construction method, a process more commonly associated with clay and early ceramic practices. Unlike carved objects, which are revealed by removing material,

this figurine was built through the deliberate accumulation of clay, emphasizing touch, pressure, and gesture in its formation. Only 4.4 inches tall, the figurine can easily rest within the palm of a human hand (Novák, n.d.), reinforcing its intimate scale and portability. This small size encourages close, tactile engagement, situating the object within a personal rather than monumental sphere as with larger scale sculpture. As Richard Neer argues, the intimacy and physical closeness required to interact with such human-like forms places the viewer in a direct encounter with the object, compelling the beholder to confront their own assumptions about spatial and somatic relationships (Neer 2020, 14).



Figure 1. Venus of Dolní Věstonice, "Petr Novák, Wikipedia"

Introduction to scale

When viewing or creating a figurine, the experience of scale becomes especially pronounced; the miniature world emerges as distinct and consciously separated from our own, precisely because of this shift in proportion. This dynamic is explored in *Lust*

Collectors, where most objects are rendered at a miniaturized scale. Their diminutive size distances them from everyday human dimensions, situating them instead within a self-contained, interpretive realm. Within this space, the sculpted figures carry a striking degree of emotional intensity and symbolic weight. They function as theatricalized embodiments of human feeling, suspended in time through the permanent performance of fired ceramic. Gesture, posture, and movement are fixed and refined, transforming fleeting human actions into enduring visual statements that elevate and preserve embodied experience. *Untitled Nudes (Lonely on My Rock)* no. 2 and no. 3 (2025) physicalizes the fleeting act of sunbathing alongside the artist's complex emotional response. A gaze of longing is projected from one figure onto the other, balancing desire with hesitation. One seeks to be seen, while the other cautiously assumes the role of observer. By rendering this moment in ceramic, the artist externalizes an internalized memory, giving tangible form and language to emotions once suppressed or difficult to confront.

Due to their scale, the pair of figurines occupy a space distinct from the human body, reflecting lived reality while constructing a world of their own. Their smallness invites close attention, drawing the viewer into an intimate, contemplative encounter. The sculptures condense feeling and encourage critical self-reflection, prompting viewers to consider their own physical presence. Encountering a miniaturized human form can evoke curiosity, empathy, or unease, but ultimately heightens awareness of one's body in relation to the surrounding environment (Insoll 2017, 9). As bodies made material, the figurines raise questions about embodiment, perception, and the extent of human agency in the world (Meskell 2017, 26).



Figure 2. Untitled nudes (Lonely on My Rock) no.2 and no.3, 2025, wood soda fired stoneware and terracotta, wax

The Goddess Theory

When the first prehistoric female figurines were unearthed across Europe in the nineteenth century, many excavators interpreted them through a narrow, gendered lens, assuming they were created for erotic use and intended for a male audience, the Paleolithic equivalent of a “pin-up.” These objects were grouped under the label of Venus figurines, referencing the Greco-Roman goddess of love and beauty. This naming imposed a classical, Western framework onto artifacts that predate such cultural systems by tens of thousands of years (Feldman 2017). In recent decades, this interpretation has been widely debated. Because no written records survive from this prehistoric period, archaeologists were left to interpret material objects without context, often projecting contemporary beliefs onto ancient societies. Within the intellectual climate of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, scholars frequently assumed that early human communities mirrored their own social structures. As a result, women were presumed to occupy subordinate roles, and representations of the female body were read primarily through the lens of male desire and heteronormative sexuality (Murr et al., n.d.). Such interpretations reveal more about the biases of early researchers rather than about the

intentions of the objects' makers. The corpulent figures were also believed to be maternal in nature, emphasized sexual organs were understood to be displays of fertility, and by extension the figurines were understood to be representing the fertility of the environment, a Mother Goddess of some kind. These generalizations about the purpose of the figurines leave little room for contextual findings and assume that multiple societies across generations were depicting the same goddess figure, an expansive religious belief system hidden from the contemporary world.

During the second wave of feminism in the twentieth century, scholars began to revisit earlier interpretations of prehistoric female figurines, proposing alternative frameworks that challenged male-centered narratives. Central to this shift was the idea of a pre-patriarchal, matrifocal society in which a powerful goddess or pantheon of goddesses was venerated before the rise of male-dominated social structures. This offered an alternative answer as to why so many figurines were depictions of a female body with pronounced sexual organs. The work of Marija Gimbutas, a scholar and ethno-archaeologist, became especially influential in advancing this perspective. Gimbutas argued that there was an unresearched ancient European society that was relatively peaceful, egalitarian, and centered around goddess worship, as evidenced by the abundance of figurines and symbolic motifs she interpreted as divine or sacred. She further proposed that this cultural system was disrupted by the arrival of the Kurgans, a group she characterized as violent, patriarchal invaders from the Eurasian steppes. While her research was groundbreaking in the manner it challenged preconceived beliefs about the purpose of prehistoric female figurines, it has also been widely critiqued. Scholars have pointed out that Gimbutas often presented her conclusions with a level of certainty that exceeded what the archaeological evidence could definitively support. By interpreting figurines as direct representations of goddesses, her work risked replacing one overarching narrative with another, highlighting the ongoing tension between interpretation and evidence in prehistoric studies (Allan 2025, 48-57).

These academic interpretations of the purpose and function of the sculpted female body are critically examined in *Lust Collectors*. Both frameworks, whether rooted in early archaeological assumptions or later feminist reinterpretations, position the female form as an object intended to elicit worship, desire, or awe, shaped by either an external gaze or an internalized one. The artist engages directly with this tension, displaying the learned expectations surrounding how women are meant to present themselves in both public and private spheres. Through sculpture, these expectations are made visible, with each figurine embodying recognizable postures and behaviors associated with feminine behaviors or desires. Rather than rejecting these normative constructs, the works lean into their familiarity, presenting figures that do not radically depart from conventional depictions of women in love or longing. However, these behaviors are amplified through

theatricality and melodrama, transforming subtle gestures into heightened expressions. This exaggeration allows the sculptures to articulate the emotional intensity that often underlies such actions. In doing so, the artist gives form to internal experiences, exposing the complexity and performative nature of gendered behavior while inviting viewers to reconsider the assumptions embedded within these representations. Lots of the figurines within the exhibition are slumped dramatically over a surface, referencing not only classical Western notions of the female nude, but also in an excessive display of emotional reaction, something unacceptable yet stereotypical in contemporary gender presentation. In *St. Bored variation* (2025), another figure exists on a rock-like form, following the curve of the surface with her body, lifting from the surface with only curling palms and feet. The melodramatic posture is an externalization of how strong emotions affect and exhaust the artist. The wax dripping on top of the finished surface imitates water, the figure left forgotten to drown or ignored by the world of figurines that the exhibition creates.



Figure 3. St. Bored variation, 2025, wood soda fired stoneware, wax

The transformative significance of clay

In imitating and recreating the human body through figurines, makers parallel processes found in cosmogonic myths across cultures, where humanity is formed through deliberate acts of construction in clay. The physical act of building up a figure from raw material situates the maker in a position of generative power, echoing the role of divine beings who “created” humans in origin narratives (Allan 2025, 8). This connection between artistic practice and mythic creation emphasizes the conceptual weight of working with clay, a material that is both malleable and enduring. In early Mesopotamian literature such as the *Atrahasis*, humanity is described as emerging from a fusion of divine and earthly substances, the blood of a lesser god mixed with clay from the earth (Winitzer et al. 2025). This narrative establishes a divine and earthy connection to human origin, emphasizing

clay as a vital, life-giving substance. The intimacy of this material reinforces its symbolic resonance as a medium through which life itself can be imagined and understood. Although the *Atrahasis* was recorded around 2000 BCE, more than 20,000 years after the creation, fragmentation, and deposition of the *Venus of Dolní Věstonice*, this significant temporal gap highlights the enduring cultural importance of clay. Across millennia, clay has remained central to the articulation of human origins, serving as a medium that gives physical form to abstract ideas about creation, identity, and humanity's place within the natural world.

The artist and her ceramic material exist in an intimate, reciprocal relationship shaped by touch, responsiveness, and transformation. Because of the inherent materiality of clay, its softness, malleability, and sensitivity to pressure, the making process unfolds as a kind of dialogue between artist and medium. The clay yields and resists in turn, allowing its form to be gradually shaped into imagery drawn from human imagination. As the artist's hands directly engage with the surface, pressing, smoothing, and building, a heightened sense of intimacy and care emerges within the act of creation. This tactile exchange embeds traces of the maker's presence into the object itself. Once fired, the clay undergoes a permanent transformation, hardening into a ceramic material that can endure millennia. In this shift, fleeting, deeply personal emotions are preserved and extended far beyond their original moment. Whether that diminishes their value or elevates, it remains to be seen, a conceptual investigation that will exist far beyond this body of work. The artist imagines that she is touching a physical body, carefully articulating the subtle curves and indentations that skin naturally holds. She draws on memories of touch, allowing sensation and recollection to guide her hand as it shapes the clay into a human figure. This process becomes both intimate and reflective, blurring the boundary between memory and material. The work also explores power dynamics within relationships: it evokes the divine act of creating humankind from clay, while simultaneously examining control, vulnerability, and balance within romantic and interpersonal connections.

Power dynamics

Internal desires drive the imagery created within this exhibition, shaping both form and narrative. The artist dwells on specific events and memories tied to intense emotional experiences, translating them into tangible objects through the medium of ceramics. Using the language of figurines, many of which function as partial self-portraits, she constructs a visual vocabulary that allows her to process and articulate feelings that might otherwise remain unspoken. Within this conceptual environment, power dynamics emerge as a central theme, with each figure acting as a stand-in for real-world interpersonal relationships and tensions. The figurines inhabit a world that feels theatrical and

melodramatic, amplifying gesture, expression, and interaction. Yet, despite this heightened quality, they often reveal truths more directly than the artist's outward behavior in everyday life. In their exaggerated poses and scenarios, the figures communicate intention, vulnerability, and conflict with a clarity that resists the social filters present in lived experience.

This dynamic is most apparent in the paired figurines *Stuck in the Mud* no.1 and no.2 (2025). One figure, the Huntress, an embodiment of Artemis, stands poised after releasing an arrow toward a second figure positioned on a separate pedestal. A wide expanse of negative space stretches between them, heightening the tension and isolating each body within its own emotional and physical realm. The arrow has already been fired; the action is complete. Yet the Huntress continues to hold her bow aloft, as if suspended in the moment of release, while the struck figure has just begun to collapse under the force of impact, with the arrow piercing through the body. The violence unfolds in an eerie stillness, suggesting inevitability rather than resistance. There is no visible struggle, only a quiet acceptance that implicates both figures. Through this tableau, the artist explores how individuals may willingly endure harm from those they love or admire. At the same time, the work examines the unsettling capacity to derive meaning, or even satisfaction, from inflicting pain. These roles are not fixed; instead, they shift fluidly, revealing the instability between perpetrator and victim.



Figure 4. The Huntress/ Stuck in the mud, 2025, wood soda fired stoneware, thread



Figure 5. Stuck in the mud, 2025, wood soda fired stoneware

Significance of the Bow and Arrow

The bow and arrow motif within *Lust Collectors* operates as a visual manifestation of the violence and pain embedded within interpersonal relationships and the memories they leave behind. Rather than depicting overt conflict, the motif suggests a quieter, more internalized wounding, one that lingers and reshapes the emotional body over time. This symbolic framework resonates strongly with *Eros the Bittersweet* by Anne Carson, in which ancient Greek conceptions of love are examined through the deity figure of Eros. In Carson's analysis, Eros is not simply a benign force of attraction, but a deity whose arrows inflict a paradoxical state of longing, simultaneously pleasurable and painful. The lover, struck by this force, becomes both victim and participant, consumed by desire while also defined by absence. At the same time, the beloved is positioned as a kind of quarry, pursued yet necessarily distant. This distance sustains the intensity of desire, making fulfillment almost counterproductive. Within *Lust Collectors*, the bow and arrow thus

become a metaphor for this cyclical pursuit: to love is to wound and be wounded, to chase and to be chased, caught in a perpetual oscillation between closeness and separation (Carson 1986).

Social Values within Figurines

Around the same period that prehistoric figurines were being excavated and cataloged, a thriving figurine industry was flourishing in Victorian England and across neighboring European regions. Porcelain and porcelaneous figures were produced specifically for domestic interiors, where they functioned as decorative objects that reflected increasing access to material goods. This rise in consumption was closely tied to wealth generated through imperial expansion and colonial systems, which enabled broader segments of society to participate in practices of display and ornamentation. A significant portion of these figurines depicted members of the royal family, reinforcing the authority of the monarchy and embedding symbols of political power within the private sphere of the home. In this way, everyday interiors became sites where national identity and allegiance were subtly performed and maintained. Other popular subjects included scenes drawn from current events, popular theater, and widely circulated national myths (Pugh 1987, 13–35). One recurring image is that of Saint George, whose legend, slaying a dragon, became emblematic of English virtue and heroism. This narrative, often understood as an adaptation of the ancient myth of Perseus and Andromeda, reflects how classical stories were reshaped to serve national and ideological purposes (Hall 1972, 32).

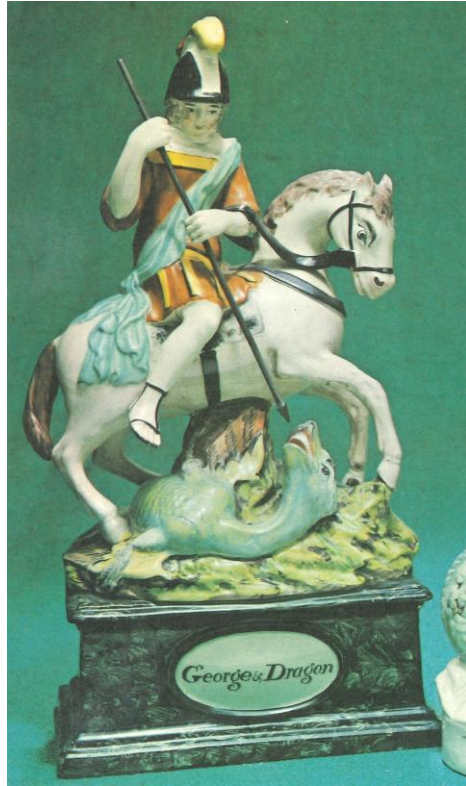


Figure 6. 'George & Dragon', Wood & Caldwell, 1795, collection of Mrs. Hinda Leben

This particular figurine form held a strong fascination for the artist. The retelling of myth to serve a specific, often imposed narrative parallels the way personal memories, especially those tied to interpersonal relationships, can be reshaped, distorted, and reinterpreted over time. Repetition and emotional investment can transform these memories, blurring the boundary between truth and projection. Her interpretation, *St. Bored* (2026), emerges directly from this line of thinking. In this work, the rider remains present, still armed and poised for action, yet there is no visible adversary to confront. The absence of a monster disrupts the expected narrative of heroism and conquest. Instead, the figure's aggression is left unresolved, turned inward or displaced. Beneath the rider, a deer, who substitutes the traditionally powerful horse, struggles to bear the burden, its body buckling under the implied weight of tension and retaliation.



Figure 7. St. Bored, 2026, wood soda fired stoneware

Using figurines to display social values is a powerful method for reinforcing the normative beliefs of a given time period. These small, highly visible objects act as carriers of ideology, embedding expectations about behavior, appearance, and social roles into the domestic sphere. By presenting idealized versions of gender hierarchies and modes of public conduct, figurines not only guided contemporary viewers in modeling their own behavior, but also normalized these standards through repetition and familiarity. Positioned within the home, they blurred the boundary between decoration and instruction, quietly shaping how individuals understood themselves and others. At the same time, these objects serve as valuable historical records, allowing future generations to interpret the socio-material landscape from which they emerged. The figurines produced in Staffordshire, for instance, reveal much about the cultural and political climate of their era. Their simplified anatomy, stylized forms, and often idealized pastoral

or domestic settings contribute to a visual language that is both accessible and symbolic (McKay, n.d.).

Deer as motif

The presence of the deer in *Lust Collectors* is overwhelming, operating both independently and in dialogue with the accompanying figurines. They occupy the same constructed space while also resisting it, asserting a symbolic weight that extends beyond their material form. Historically, deer have signified a longing for freedom, an ideal of harmony between humans and nature, and a role as intermediaries between physical and spiritual realms. One of the most direct referential connections within *Lust Collectors* is to the Greco-Roman goddess Artemis, the deity of the hunt, who was frequently depicted alongside deer as sacred companions. This association reinforces the animal's longstanding connection to reverence, protection, and the tension between life and death ("The Timeless Symbolism of Deer: Myth, Nature, and Harmony" 2024).

Zoomorphic figurines have long been used to articulate human relationships with the natural world, often in ways that feel more immediate and legible than anthropomorphic forms. Because they are not human bodies, they can carry layered meanings that extend beyond self-representation. Scholars have suggested that such figures may have functioned as substitutes for real animals in sacrificial contexts, or as objects of ritual and spiritual significance for their makers and users (Campbell, n.d., 68). In this sense, the deer within *Lust Collectors* may be understood as both symbolic stand-ins and active participants in a larger system of meaning.

For the artist, however, the deer also take on a deeply personal and contemporary significance. They become symbols of modern society's disconnection from nature, as well as witnesses to human failure. Growing up in the suburban South, the artist encountered deer as displaced inhabitants, moving through fragmented patches of land left behind by development. These animals navigated environments that once resembled their natural habitats but had been reshaped by human intervention. Subject to population control, vulnerable to vehicle collisions, and often left as casualties of expansion, deer emerge as martyred figures of a disrupted ecosystem.

In this framework, the deer appear almost aware of their human counterparts, embodying a quiet, unsettling recognition. Their presence suggests a mirroring of human behavior, as if their vulnerability and exposure reflect patterns of self-destructive action within contemporary life.



Figure 8. Deer, 2025, wood soda fired stoneware

When connecting the female figurines to the zoomorphic deer, another relational dynamic comes into view. With the deer as companions to the human figures, the idea of silent observation is heightened, as if the animals bear witness without intervention. They appear attentive yet detached, reinforcing a sense of quiet tension within the scene. At the same time, the deer physically support and carry the figurines, quite literally bearing their weight. This act of support deepens their symbolic role, suggesting both care and burden, as they assist in shaping the figures' actions, emotional resonance, and broader narrative meaning. In *Lookin' for love* (2026) the deer and figurine exist as lookouts for the other, helping one another achieve the goal of romantic fulfillment.



Figure 9. Lookin' for love, 2026, wood soda fired stoneware

Comparative analysis

In comparing prehistoric figurines, Staffordshire figurines, and the artist's contemporary practice, a consistent thread of bodily representation emerges, one that reflects and reinforces systems of cultural values and beliefs. Each of these forms engages with social concerns surrounding the embodied experience, using imagery to establish and circulate norms about how bodies are seen, understood, and performed. These objects do not simply depict the body; they actively participate in shaping expectations of it, functioning as both representations and agents of cultural ideology. Embodiment, understood as the conscious experience of living within one's own body, resists the division of mind and body into separate entities. Instead, it emphasizes their interdependence and mutual construction.

Within this framework, figurines become sites through which bodily meaning is both expressed and defined. Early feminist thought sought to assert women's autonomy over their bodies in response to patriarchal control, framing the body as something one could

act upon or possess. While politically necessary, this framing risks reinforcing a separation between self and body, positioning the body as an object rather than an integral aspect of subjectivity. Thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir complicate this notion by emphasizing female corporeality as lived and situated. From this perspective, the body is not an object to be owned, but a condition shaped by social, historical, and experiential contexts, inseparable from identity itself. Gender, then, is not merely expressed through the body's particular sex but constituted through repeated acts informed by external pressures and expectations. The performance of gender is deeply influenced by societal norms, which dictate how individuals present themselves through both appearance and behavior (Lennon and Fischer 2010).

Figurines offer a conceptual framework through which to examine how personhood is constructed and maintained, and how abstract ideas of sex and gender are embedded within visual culture. Across historical contexts, the display of the body in figurative form reveals shifting attitudes toward femininity and the female experience. Prehistoric Venus figurines, for instance, emphasize exaggerated sexual characteristics, foregrounding fertility and reproduction. This prioritization suggests that the female body may have been valued primarily for its biological functions, raising questions about whether distinctions between mind and body were culturally articulated in the same way they are today. At the same time, considering these figures as embodiments rather than mere objects opens the possibility of interpreting them as possessing presence, agency, or even subjectivity within their cultural contexts. The translation of the body into material form further complicates these readings. When rendered in clay, the body becomes both familiar and estranged, imbued with the physical properties and symbolic associations of its medium. In Staffordshire figurines, the use of porcelain introduces connotations of purity, refinement, and moral virtue. The whiteness of the clay body is not neutral, reflecting and reinforcing racialized hierarchies and colonial ideologies embedded within material culture. These figurines, often decorative and mass-produced, contributed to the normalization of specific ideals of beauty, class, and propriety. In the artist's contemporary practice, these historical precedents are both referenced and challenged. By reworking the figurative form, the artist interrogates inherited systems of representation and opens space for alternative understandings of the body. The figurine becomes not only an object of display, but a critical tool, one that exposes how deeply cultural values are inscribed onto the body, and how those inscriptions continue to shape perceptions of identity, agency, and belonging.

Firing methods

The visual outcome of the figurines in *Lust Collectors* is shaped primarily through wood soda firing, an atmospheric method in which soda ash is introduced into the kiln at peak temperature. This process creates highly variable and unpredictable surfaces, allowing the environment of the kiln itself to become an active collaborator in the final appearance of the work (“process — casey beck”, n.d.). Wood kilns have existed as sites of production and community since as early as 6000 BCE (Shannon 2025), their technological development paralleling broader societal shifts in industry and craft. The artist utilized an anagama kiln, a traditional Japanese, wood-fired structure that relies entirely on manual stoking over the course of several days to reach optimal temperatures. During this prolonged firing, ash produced by the burning wood is carried through the kiln by flame, settling onto the surfaces of the figurines. As temperatures rise, this ash melts and forms a natural glaze, fusing unpredictably with the clay body. The addition of soda ash, a more contemporary intervention, further complicates this process. Vaporizing within the kiln, it interacts with both the clay and ash deposits, creating dynamic surface variations that respond sensitively to flame movement and chemical reactions.

The artist employs this method of firing to conceptually extend her investigation of interpersonal relationship dynamics and power structures. By positioning herself as one half of a relationship and the kiln as the other, she establishes a system rooted in care, reciprocity, and endurance. The physical labor required to sustain the kiln; constant stoking, monitoring, and adjustment mirrors the emotional labor involved in maintaining intimate relationships. Attention becomes both a necessity and a form of devotion. Within this exchange, the wood kiln assumes an active role, ultimately completing the figurines within its extreme and volatile environment. Its presence is inscribed onto their surfaces through ash deposits, flame markings, and chemical transformations. The figurines function as emotional catalogues, holding traces of desire and vulnerability, while the kiln subjects them to intense heat, permanently fixing these otherwise fleeting experiences of romantic attraction into material form.

With *Alien Prayer* (2026), the flashing marks of the soda ash’s directional movement appear as pink blushes across one side of the figurine, producing unexpected surface variations that evoke flushed or sunburnt skin. This effect lends the figure a heightened sense of vulnerability. The figurine appears to be praying for something private, reinforcing the figurines’ connection to devotion and intimate spiritual expression.



Figure 10. Alien Prayer, 2026, wood soda fired stoneware

Conclusion

In conclusion, the artist's investigation into diverse figurine traditions and ceramic histories results in a body of work grounded in the enduring human impulse to understand the world and encode social values through clay. By engaging with complex questions of gender and interpersonal relationships, the work situates itself within a broader lineage of representation and critique. Early depictions of the female body, particularly prehistoric figurines, have served as both inspiration and points of contention for scholars and

feminist thinkers, prompting evolving ideas about embodiment, agency, and personhood. The influence of Staffordshire porcelain figurines is evident in the artist's attention to posture, gesture, and narrative expression, informing how behavior is visually constructed through form. These historical references are not merely aesthetic but conceptual, shaping the emotional and social dimensions of the work. The inclusion of deer and the use of wood firing further extend these concerns, embedding the artist's reflections on relationships, vulnerability, and transformation within both imagery and process.

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