

GREY AREA



and after torrid yet ultimately dissatisfying affairs with various bronzes and coppers, fell long and hard for a shimmering shade of tarnished silver we call graphite. A color that's part pencil lead, part iron ore, and part wet coal, graphite has a glamorous gunmetal-like sheen that meshes perfectly with much of our work — most especially James's hand-thrown Bullet sculptures.

As a potter, James is always exploring form in a sculptural way. In his Bullet series, he discovered the perfect fusion of ceramics and sculpture. "Bullets are hand-thrown forms existing as purely sculptural objects, albeit objects with meaning," he says. "The phallic shape symbolizes masculinity and man's violence in the world, while graphite is glossy and alluring and sexy — a metaphor for how society glamorizes violence."

Graphite also gives these sleek abstractions immediate context. Studio visitors have intuitively called them bullets, missiles or nuclear warheads ever since James threw his first prototypes a year or so ago.

Are we drawn to graphite for its film noir sensibilities? We do tune in to an awful lot of TCM, and could happily watch *Night of the Hunter* and *Double Indemnity* on a perpetual loop. Graphite grey's depth expresses menacing gloom and shadowy glamour, an alluring combination if ever there was one. Add the reflective, metallic aspect of the hue, and a commentary on self-knowledge emerges. Are we what we think we are, or are we a dark, unfamiliar version of the face we present to the world? There is a certain amount of danger in graphite. Which makes it the perfect color for James's dangerous forms.

James Salaiž graduated from Cornell College, Mount Iowa with a Bachelor's degree in ceramics and photography in 1998. Following a series of potter gigs in Boulder, Colorado and San Francisco he moved to the East Coast, and began an internship with Jonathan Adler in NYC, throwing pieces for mass production and assisting with sculptural prototypes. Mark Welsh, an ad-man with latent artistic tendencies, dropped by the studio one day, and the rest, as they say, is history. In 2008 James and Mark formed their art and design company, Carter and Cunningham (an alliterative fusion of their mothers' maiden names), and began producing limited edition objects in clay, sculptural objects and unique works of art. Carter and Cunningham also recently collaborated with home design company West Elm.

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o offense to ecru, ivory, chalk, alabaster, or the fairest of them all, Snow White, but the nuances in differing shades of everyone's favorite non-color are completely lost on us. The only white thing in our apartment is the milk in the fridge. The kitchen is navy blue. The entrance is electric orange. And our studio walls are painted Louisburg green, an unexpectedly great foil for art, though it has been unfavorably compared to the nerve-calming hue popular in 1950's psychiatric institutions — more than once. We are drawn to rich, deep, emotion stirring color — and lots of it.

Two years ago we added metallics to our broad-church palette, and are still exploring their powers of representation. We began by experimenting with metallic glazes in the studio,

White is the presence of all color. Black is the absence of it. So what is grey? Grey is equivocal, layered, hard to pin down. It has no official place in the rainbow. But a world without its inscrutable subtleties is impossible. Ceramist JAMES SALAIZ and ad-man/artist MARK WELSH, co-founders of the art and design company Carter and Cunningham, discuss their recent obsession with grey.

