

MODERN

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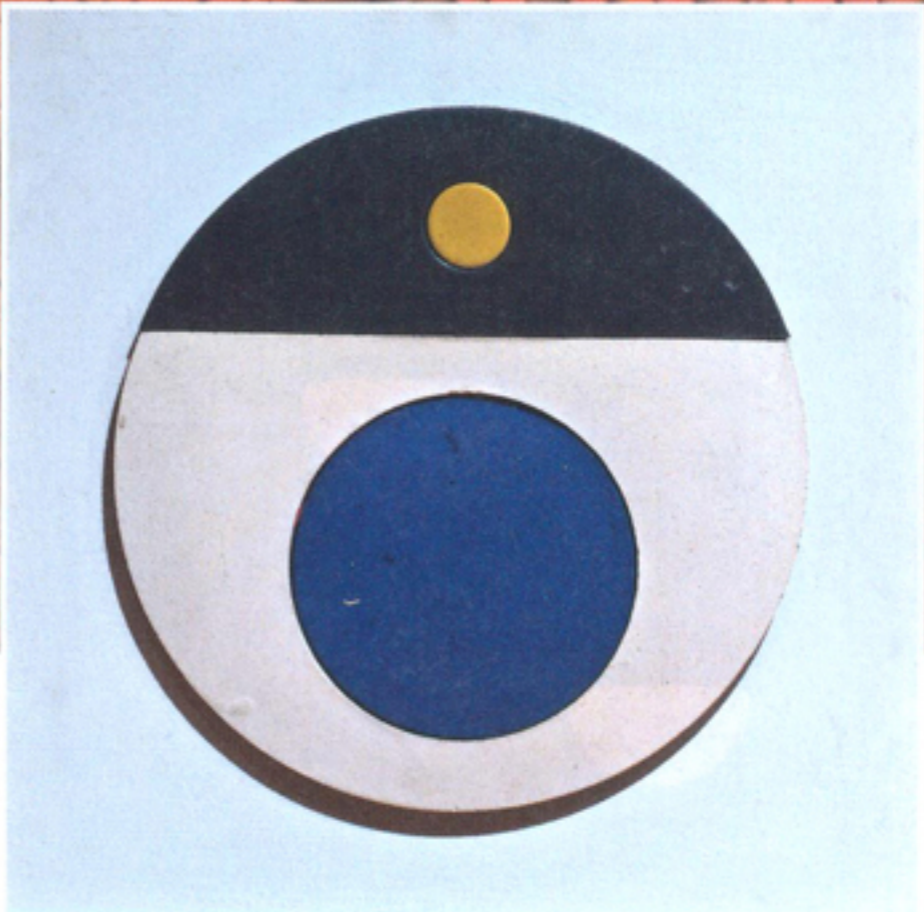
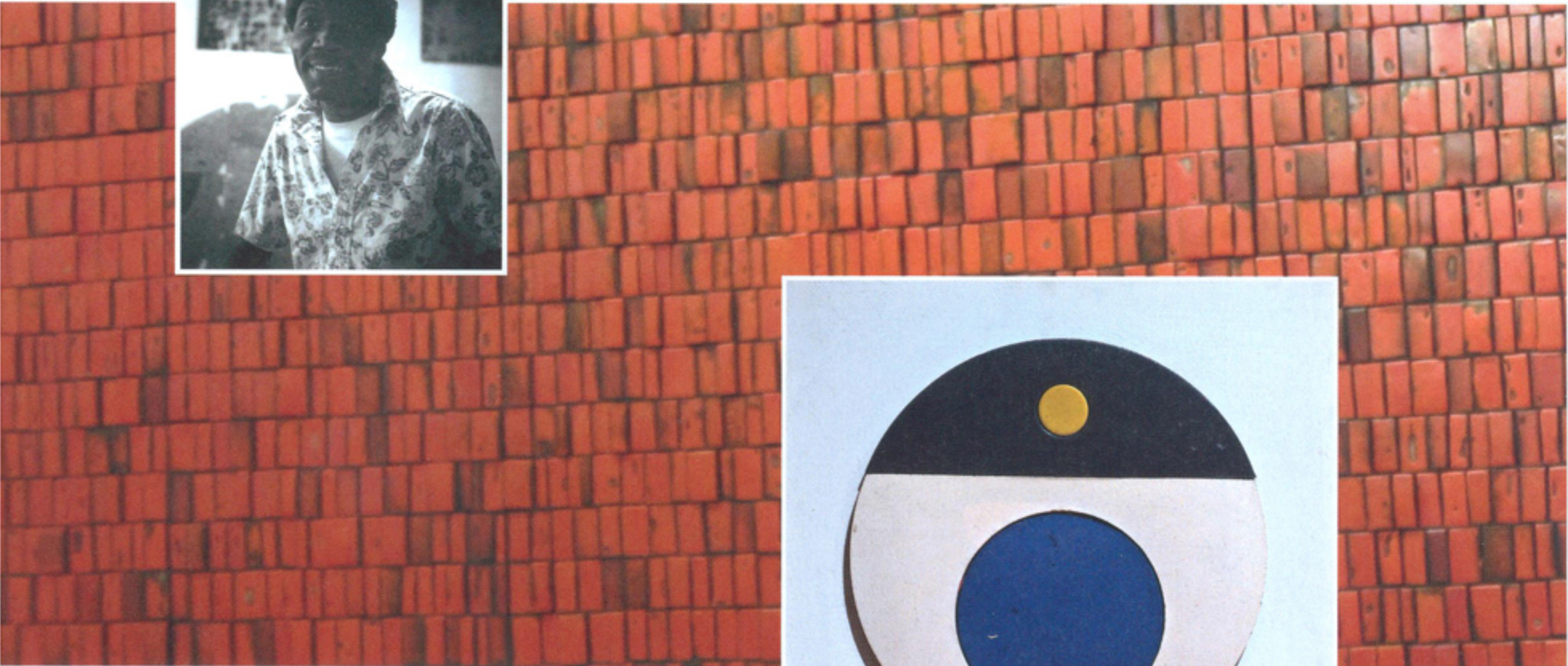
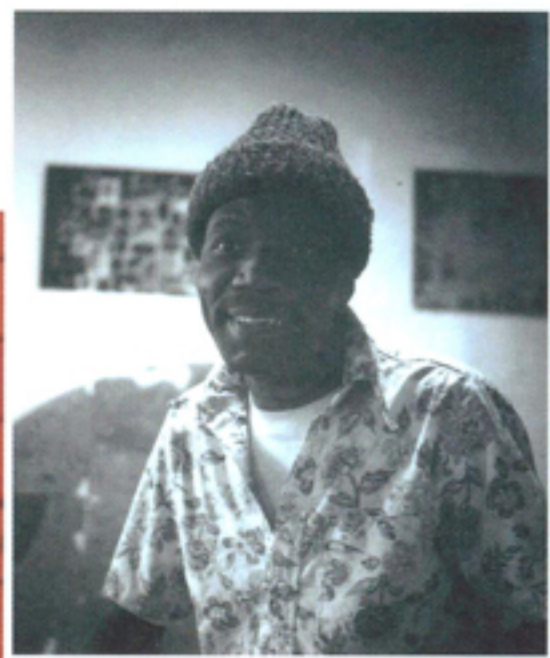
DESIGN

DECORATIVE ARTS

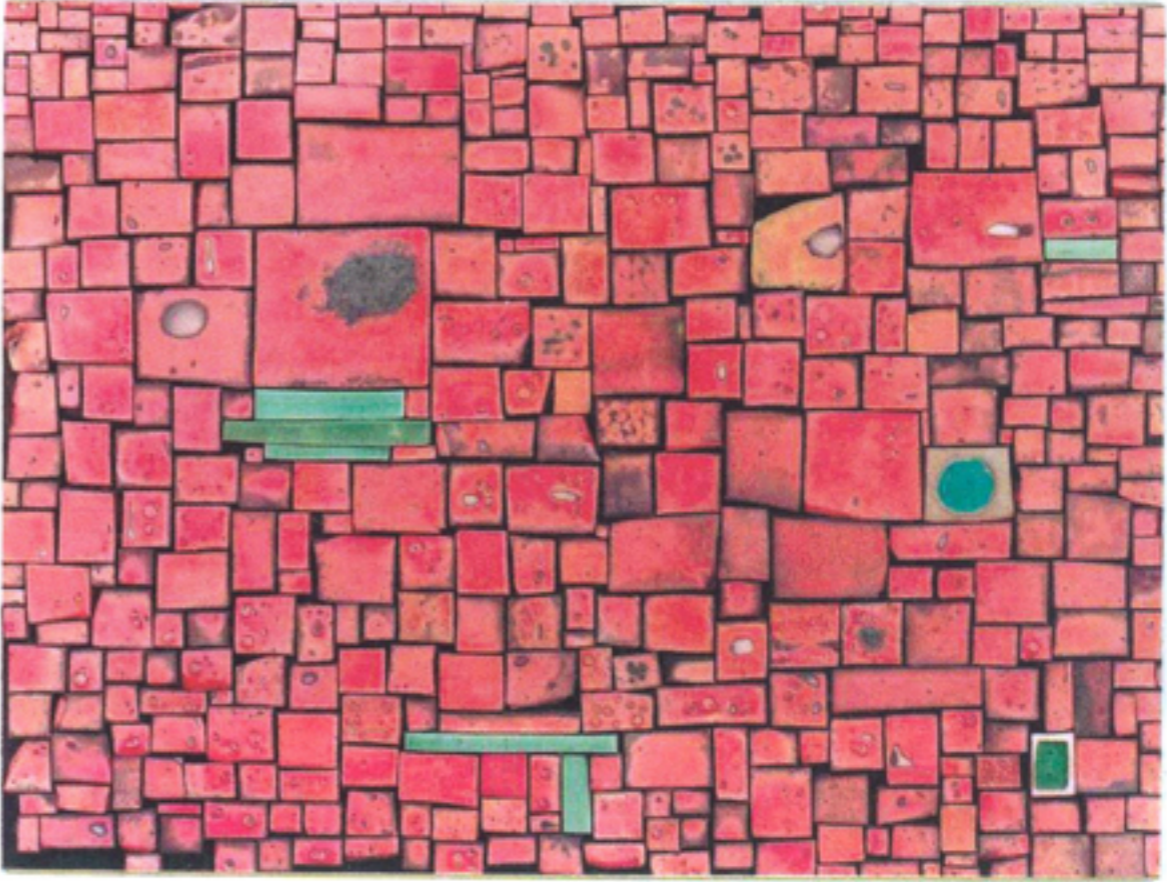
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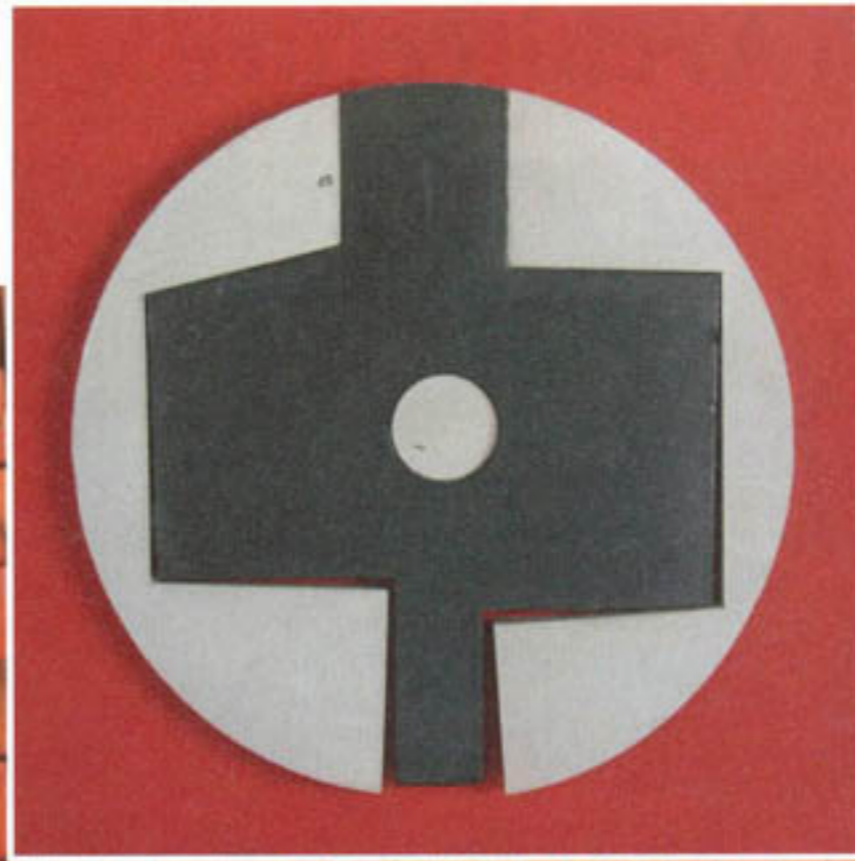
Doyle Lane: Discovering an Overlooked Ceramist of Mid-century Los Angeles



Doyle Lane: Clay Paintings, which opened in May at Gerard O'Brien's Landing at Reform Gallery, shines a spotlight on the career of an overlooked artist from the California modern era. Doyle Lane worked as a ceramist, painter, and muralist after moving from Louisiana to Los Angeles in the 1950s to attend art school. As an African-American artist in a marketplace that had not yet embraced diversity (to say the least), Lane earned a steady living through the years, often cold-calling architects and designers to show his portfolio in search of commissions for his mosaic tile work. Having been advised by art school classmates to avoid ceramics because, as Lane later put it, "that's mainly for white people," he rejected this conventional wisdom and established a reputation in the field, developing a unique glazing process that makes his pieces stand out to this day for their shimmering colors. The master mid-century ceramist Otto Natzler counted himself one of the many admirers of Lane's work, and was reportedly unwilling to consult with anyone else on matters related to glazes. Among contemporary collectors of ceramics, Lane's geodesic clay pots have earned him something of a cult following. O'Brien, who deals in decorative arts through the adjoining Reform Gallery, notes that Lane's pot-



JOE MEADE PHOTO BEN SERAR PHOTO CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM MEGAN GAGE PHOTO



tery tends to “draw people with an eye for design, people who are ‘makers’ much like Doyle himself.”

The Landing’s exhibition showcases Lane’s other applications for his ceramic glazes. In the 1960s, during the height of L. A.’s “Birth of the Cool” period, he began to paint directly on clay tablets, creating abstract geometric patterns with colors intended to interact directly with natural light. The show features around a dozen of these pieces on loan from the California African American Museum and several private collectors. A filtered glass pane allows sunlight to illuminate them during the day, as Lane originally envisioned. The centerpiece, however, is a wall-sized mosaic mural of handcrafted tiles glazed in different chromatics of red, a perfect example of Lane’s mastery of color and material. O’Brien describes transplanting and reconstructing the mural, which was originally commissioned by the famed L. A. architect Welton Becket for a Pasadena bank (now owned by Berkshire Hathaway), as “the most audacious thing” he has ever done at either the Landing or Reform Gallery. It will all be worth it, however, if it elevates Doyle Lane to his rightful place among the luminaries of the California modern movement. reform-modern.com

—Adam Dunlop-Farkas