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ART 3002

17 December 2025

Final Project: Alake Shilling and Contemporary Ceramics

Alake Shilling is a mulit-media artist based in Los Angeles, California. She was born in 1993 in LA, and has stayed there and developed herself as an artist throughout her career. She studied at two major art institutions, a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, which she began in 2012. She also studied at the Los Angeles City College in 2015. Shilling did not have the easiest time in college, which she acknowledges in an interview for Metal Magazine, a European-based publication. “There was a certain disconnect between the way she was viewing art practice, and her professors were. Seeing art as play and discovery, she wanted to explore materials and ideas in a way that felt intuitive as she found herself drawn more towards self-directed experimentation, which didn’t sit well” (Metal Magazine, 2025) Shilling grew up with a single mother who tried to get her daughter to be as involved with the arts as possible. Shilling pulls her inspiration and creativity from everyday objects around her, something I can relate to in my studio practices.

Alake Shilling’s art and studio practices are based around the senses and how viscerality plays a role in making art that is structured. A lot of the materials she uses are items she grew up around; items she touched, felt, held, and had a connection with. In her interview with Metal Magazine, Shilling says, “I love mixing materials in a way that feels edible, like something you could squish between your fingers or bite into. There’s also something surreal about food, it can

be comforting or grotesque, which is a duality I like to play with.” (Shilling for Metal Magazine, 2025) I can compare this use of mixed materials to my practices with clay and structured/clay based art. Personally, clay has always reminded me somewhat of food for some strange and uncanny reason. Obviously that thought it laughable, and I would never eat clay, but there is something texturally that makes me want to. I guess squishing it between my fingers will have to suffice for now.

I can draw a lot of comparisons between Alake Shilling’s studio practices and my own. For one, Shilling’s obsessions with texture and the senses hold a lot of weight when compared to mine. My artwork and all of my art practices, which include but are not limited to, film/video, painting, sculpture, mixed media collage, and performance art, all are focused on the body and the senses. Things you can see, feel, hear, touch, smell; ways to activate the senses that have not been thought of before. In Shilling’s interview for Metal Magazine, I found myself to be connected to one quote of hers in particular. Shilling states, “Texture makes art feel alive. I want my sculptures to be things you want to touch, hug, and cuddle — like candy, but also like strange relics from another world. This is the way I explore intimacy through the alluring sensuality of texture.” (Shilling 2025). The concept of intimacy through the sensuality of texture is not a concept I had been able to put a name to until Shilling stated that is what she is aiming to create in her ceramic sculptures. I feel deeply connected to Alake Shilling’s work, and I can’t wait to uncover more of what she has to offer.

Conclusion

All in all, Alake Shilling is an amazing mixed-media artist whose ceramic sculpture artwork is some of the most revolutionary work I have ever seen. Her work is anti-establishment in nature, which perhaps is what is most alluring to me about it. I love how she is able to take ephemeral

objects from our everyday lives as Americans and craft them into things that we can touch with our mind (and I mean that quite literally) I would say that Shilling is an artist to look out for, because if she continues with the way she is going, she will be one of the greatest artists of the 21st century.

View Shilling's Instagram page here: <https://www.instagram.com/sillyshilli/?hl=en>

Works Cited

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Das, Upasana. “Alake Shilling.” *Metal Magazine*, 22 Apr. 2025, metalmagazine.eu/en/post/alake-shilling. Accessed 17 Dec. 2025.