

# Finding the Authentic Self



**CJ Niehaus**  
Illinois, USA

Each mark is a thought. Each thought a part of the story.

“Authentic Self” challenged me to be more honest with my work. In developing my line of ceramics, I have used animals as avatars for important people in my life, but I don’t often include myself in the stories told on the surface of my pots. Certain objects contain meaning for me, but I like to hide behind them – anonymous. For this show, I am fully present. Others come with me, but they are there to help guide me.

The materials I have chosen to work with assist my ideas. Using an underglaze pencil allows for a specific kind of line. It is soft and wavering and sometimes in the heat of the kiln it will fade out. Its tenuousness is like the uncertainties and memories in life and so much more delicious when grasped – like a word you just can’t quite remember, then it bursts into your mind! Underglaze washes work for matte color and delineation of forms, because life isn’t shiny except for in bursts. And it’s really in the differences between matte and shiny that excitement lives.

Most often I use functional forms to convey my ideas. And when not functional, I still gravitate towards vessel forms with interior spaces. Clay speaks to me of “holding space.” That is what makes it unique to other manners of narrative expression. A vase, of course, is a holding space for water and flowers, but the deeper meaning is that we walk this journey together. These stories and themes explored are universal: loss, vulnerability, renewal and connection. It is through my work that I hope to connect with the viewer, to show our similarities outweigh any differences.

**curated**  

---

ceramics

CuratedCeramics.com Minneapolis (612) 719-9632