As an artist I am interested in how the artifacts we leave behind speak to our history and cultural identity. My work is meant to straddle the present, simultaneously looking back to the past and towards the future. It catalogues the act of making, of constructing, of inventing, and reinventing. In the studio I step into the shoes of an engineer, or inventor, creating metaphoric objects that allude to an unidentifiable function. My sculptures are not recreations of objects from our culture, but abstractions of the things we find ourselves surrounded by. These aged objects are meant to spur reflection of our pursuit of "progress" in relationship to the vast expanse of human history. The themes of artifact and invention have been a consistent explor-
opposite page Red Turbine, from the Construction Series, white earthenware, stains, linseed oil, tractor paint 59.7 x 59.7 x 42 cm, 2011

above Black Turbine, from the Construction Series, white earthenware, stains, linseed oil, tractor paint 56 x 56 x 33 cm, 2011

left Blue Turbine, from the Construction Series, white earthenware, stains, linseed oil, tractor paint 52 x 52 x 48.3 cm, 2011
I engage with our technology-driven and computer-facilitated culture by designing my pieces on a computer, and then build them in an intentionally low-tech way as a means of keeping them rooted in past traditions of making.

The evolution of my artwork over the last ten years. I am intrigued by the historical prevalence of clay, a material so strongly linked to our cultural formation. The material seems imbued with a sense of time, carrying with it references to the many clay objects created by past civilizations. This rich history seems to be connected to the primal act of making itself.

Much of my practice has been influenced by the time and place in which I work. Eastern Oregon, like so many places in America, is littered with artifacts from a way of life that seems to be on the verge of extinction. Whether they are abandoned lumber mills or rusting farm equipment, the littered landscape becomes a record of the activities of previous generations. I find these objects, which represent a clear record of the passing of time, to be a major inspiration for the objects I create.

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Artist’s Statement
I am interested in how the artifacts we leave behind speak to our history and cultural identity. My work is meant to straddle the present, simultaneously looking back to the past and towards the future. It catalogues the act of making, of constructing, of inventing and reinventing. My sculptures are not recreations of objects from our culture but abstractions of the things we find ourselves surrounded by. These aged objects are meant to spur reflection of our pursuit of “progress” in relationship to the vast expanse of human history.

Peter Johnson currently lives and works in La Grande, Oregon, where he is an Associate Professor of Art at Eastern Oregon University. He earned his M.F.A. from Penn State University and a B.S. in Environmental Science at Wheaton College. Peter has been a resident artist and visiting lecturer at the Alberta College of Art and Design, Australian National University, The Archie Bray Foundation, the LH Project and the Odyssey Center for Ceramic Arts. His work has been exhibited in Canada, Australia and throughout the United States.

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