

## For Immediate Release

**Dana Weiser**

***Newtro***

**7 January – 25 February 2023**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 – 7:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Newtro* by Los Angeles artist, Dana Weiser. This new body of work marks her third solo exhibition with our gallery and includes large-scale ceramic vessels with surfaces ranging from traditional glazes to fitted silk coverings with handmade embroidery. The show will also include a series of drawings made from scratched surfaces on black coated holographic paper.

*Newtro* culture was derived in South Korea and combines modern trends with retro eras, creating new cultural constructions within media, music, food and fashion. For this body of work, *Newtro* acts as a paradigm for Dana Weiser's identity as a Jewish Korean adoptee and Asian American with a focus on conventional techniques, Hanbok fabrics and historical ceramic vessels inspired by the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392AD) pottery. Weiser creates a personal narrative by utilizing and employing traditional Korean imagery and objects to establish a broader historical context for her missing ethnic identity as an adoptee. Some of the vessels utilize celadon glazes originating from China on high fire gray stoneware, creating wonderful hues of green-to-blue color variations much like the Korean interpretations of Chinese celadon from previous generations. Using the traditional inlay slip decorations and intricate carvings from traditional Korean pottery as her guide, Weiser interprets her versions with imagery of pop cultural or mythical subjects ranging from the different birth flowers of the members from the K-pop band, BTS to the tiger (the symbol of Korea) presented with stylized trees of forget-me-not flowers.

Weiser expands her idea of *Newtro* by hand-embroidering narratives on to Korean fabrics used primarily to make traditional Hanbok clothing and fitting them to the surfaces of many of the ceramic vessels. The imagery includes other personal and political aspects of BTS; the flora and fauna in Korea juxtaposed with symbolic plant life and vegetation of Southern California; the Dragon King from Korean folklore along the coast of California; and a funerary piece dedicated to the atrocious death of Christina Yuna Lee who was attacked in her apartment and stabbed to death as part of the growing hate crimes against Asian Americans since the Trump presidency and the early start of the pandemic.

Weiser's ceramic sculptures combine her ongoing interest in folklore, current events and identity with her new fascination in Korean dramas and BTS which she began exploring during the period of isolation in the early pandemic. As an immunocompromised person, she took extra precautions while isolating alone at home and began learning more deeply about the music, passions and daily lives of the band members in BTS and their influence of self-love and care on a new generation of fans. Watching these young Korean men interact and go about their busy schedules helped Weiser connect to activities in the world while drawing a connection to what she has lost as a Korean adoptee whose life would have been vastly different if she was raised in Korea.

In addition to the sculptures, a series of drawings that loosely mimic traditional Korean inlay pearl and lacquer artwork by utilizing black coated paper and scratching into the surface to reveal the holographic under layer. The imagery depicts aspects of her adaptive life with her compromised health including the multitude of pill containers for her daily medication on her nightstand and the effect her disease has had altering her body. The drawings also include more enlightening subjects such as flora and fauna as a symbolic gesture of hope and two drawings dedicated to the special people in her life, one of her family and the other of her friends. Blending traditional Korean artwork, Weiser inserts flowers to symbolize the best qualities of these endearing loved ones and the special place they hold in her life. The final drawing is dedicated to herself with flowers that symbolize her desire to live a full and happy life as a chronically ill person.

Weiser received an MFA in Ceramics in 2007 and an MA in Asian American Studies in 2016 at the University of California, Los Angeles. She completed her undergraduate work at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2001 and received her BFA in 2003 from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Weiser is the recipient of several awards including a Laura Anderson Scholarship, a Elizabeth Heller Mandell Memorial Scholarship and a National Scholastic Art Award in Ceramics. She was recently a visiting artist at George Mason University and in the past at the Corcoran College of Art and Design. Weiser has been included in exhibitions at Burnet Gallery in Minneapolis and Kopeikin Gallery and Daniel Weinberg Gallery in Los Angeles. Her work is in the collection of the Amorepacific Museum in Seoul Korea as well as several private collections.