

## Surprises in irreverent clay

By LEAH OLLMAN  
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Kathy Butterly's ceramic sculptures at Shoshana Wayne Gallery are slippery little things, not just to the touch but conceptually. They dodge back and forth between beautiful and clumsy, refined and pedestrian, sweet, sly and sensual.

What they remain, throughout, is marvelously amusing and technically impressive. Each of the 14 small works (6 inches or less) in porcelain and earthenware looks like some kind of cup or vase that has collapsed in on itself. Its walls buckle and fold like heavy drapery. The undulating form sits on a small base and shifts personality at Butterly's will.

In "Push My Button," it's nakedly sexy. In "Okay," it's endearing and slightly pitiful, a gnarled lump of dark caramel wearing a Band-aid. Butterly is a meticulous illusionist, conjuring up a wealth of textures and common objects from the same basic ingredients of clay and glaze.

Bamboo, twine, rubber bands, sponges, grass and wood all make appearances as if they belonged here, and strangely, they seem to. Butterly's cleverness at bridging the high and low, the funny and the wise, calls to mind Ron Nagle, who's been practicing a similar craft, deviously and delightfully, for 40 years.

In addition to the clay pieces, Butterly also makes works on paper that combine pencil drawing with gouache painting and collaged objects. They have a similar spunky irreverence but aren't as distinctive as the sculptures. They are to the floral still life what the ceramic sculptures are to the fine china vase — extrapolations, distortions, humorous twists, hybrids of Pop art and Surrealism.

Butterly calls one of her sculptural pieces "Hat Trick." In it, a cotton-candy-colored blob (a bunny, presumably) seems to be emerging from the mouth of a collapsed green hat. It's the perfect metaphor for what Butterly's doing all throughout her terrific first show in L.A. — springing spectacular surprises from modest means. That's a trick that never gets old.

**Shoshana Wayne Gallery**, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 453-7535, through June 14. Closed Sunday and Monday.