Heved, 1995
18x7x10”, glazed terra-cotta

Pinca, 1999
25x10x12”, glazed terra-cotta

Scott Chamberlin: A Body of Work
Sculptures and Drawings
Despite their often cartoonish friendliness, Chamberlin’s sculptures are also suffused with melancholy and foreboding. These qualities are most evident in their “eroticism” by which I mean not only their sexiness but their aspiration to engage us where we are most deeply alive. George O’Keeffe called eros “a force longing to make one’s unknown known.” I believe that this “longing” drives and animates Chamberlin’s work and is what we recognize intuitively in our engagement with it.

I chose to exhibit this earlier (1990’s) body of Chamberlin’s work at the Fulginiti Art Gallery for many reasons but primarily because I was struck by the sculptures’ clear corporeal and anatomical allusions. An abstracted but uncanny resemblance to the body’s productive and reproductive plumbing is a persistent characteristic of many of the sculptures. Their “bio-organicity” – their apertures, fleshy protuberances, intestinal loops, orifices and cavities present a jumbling and occasionally grotesque dismantling of the body according to Chamberlin’s creative criteria rather than the criteria of functional veracity. Chamberlin’s imaginative scattering and redistribution of body-like parts is the antithesis of the body as a functional tool or of a “still-life.” This is art – not medical science, but its sources and affinities appear (at least to this viewer) fairly obvious. Chamberlin’s anatomical references – while they allow for a wide range of interpretation and erotic responsiveness conjure the predicaments, potentials, and anxieties of the human body. Chamberlin, in this series as well as in much of his more recent work, attempts to assert human presence. He achieves this through an abstract profusion of forms, gestures, signs, marks, historical references and particularly through the potential of clay to give room, shape and fecundity – against a frightening proliferation of totalitarian possibilities – human presence. He is my witness as an artist – primarily a ceramic artist – the working and reworking of the themes and concerns to which he is committed continues to seduce and compel me. His work is intellectually challenging and satisfying as well as aesthetically pleasurable. It is also unconventionally beautiful which is to say that the sculptures aspire to an integrative unity and a capacity for comprehensive affective experience. Although the nature of the work encompasses a range of qualities and ideas, predilections and resolutions, certain elements remain consistent. The works are typically abstract – combining amorphous tactility, intuitive construction, and instinctual urgings to dazzling effect. They are fused with melancholy and poignancy. These qualities are most evident in their “eroticism” by which I mean not only their sexiness but their aspiration to engage us where we are most deeply alive. George O’Keeffe called eros “a force longing to make one’s unknown known.” I believe that this “longing” drives and animates Chamberlin’s work and is what we recognize intuitively in our engagement with it.

As an art-historical aside, it’s worth noting that it is only fairly recently that the position of ceramics in the wider context of modern and contemporary art has been clarified and ceramic practices have finally infiltrated the world(s) of “fine art” and overcome their marginal position as an art-historical backwater. As an art-historical aside, it’s worth noting that it is only fairly recently that the position of ceramics in the wider context of modern and contemporary art has been clarified and ceramic practices have finally infiltrated the world(s) of “fine art” and overcome their marginal position as an art-historical backwater. As an art-historical aside, it’s worth noting that it is only fairly recently that the position of ceramics in the wider context of modern and contemporary art has been clarified and ceramic practices have finally infiltrated the world(s) of “fine art” and overcome their marginal position as an art-historical backwater. As an art-historical aside, it’s worth noting that it is only fairly recently that the position of ceramics in the wider context of modern and contemporary art has been clarified and ceramic practices have finally infiltrated the world(s) of “fine art” and overcome their marginal position as an art-historical backwater.