

CULTURED

FIVE LOS ANGELES SHOWS TO SEE THIS MONTH



MELVINO GARRETTI, "LIL WAYNE PADDLING UPSTREAM," 2020. PHOTO BY PAUL SALVESON, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PARKER GALLERY.

Melvino Garretti, "Vino's Carnival of Ceramic Curiosities, or the Circuitous Path to Calamity" at Parker Gallery

It seems Melvino Garretti kept busy during the past year: the funhouse of ceramics at Parker Gallery is all of a COVID-times vintage. There are woozy, candy-colored statuettes and miniature tableaux of clowns and carnival rides, and a suite of wall-mounted masks dressed up with strips of African textile. Though the man is drawn, clearly, to zany subjects, figures and forms (e.g. a guy standing atop a giant penis that wears a kind of sunburst cock ring), the particular delirium of the experience has everything to do with the ocular density of squealing color and pattern: Garretti has a distinctive approach to glaze, which he deploys in a rather painterly manner. He came to ceramics in the mid-1960s, when he was one of the original residents at Studio Watts—the workshop which served as a key hub in the Black Arts Movement in Los Angeles—and through which, in 1969, he participated in choreographer Anna Halprin's epochal performance *Ceremony of Us*. Amid the fantasia of the present show, we get little outbursts of topicality: Lil Wayne's pardon, a mask wearing a COVID mask and a memorial to the great John Outterbridge, who died in November, depicted at the end of end of his ride, on his back at the bottom of snaky slide.

Eli Diner, "Five Los Angeles Shows to See This Month." *Cultured Magazine* (March 1, 2020), accessed online.