SAMUEL WILDMAN

Through subtle alterations in the use and function of ceramic tile, soap dishes, and nightlights, Samuel Wildman pulls at the problematic relational knot that binds consumption to comfort. As a point of departure, the artist highlights the bathroom, the room in which the human body converges with the political policies that dictate the containment, transportation, and disposal of waste and water. In a bodily fusion of comedy and horror, the artist reconfigures the soap dish by extending it into a deep and mysterious recess that alludes to both the taboo pleasure of the glory hole and a digestive body cavity. Collapsing the space between the body and the home, the sculpture destabilizes the object’s standard associations with function and hygiene.

Similarly playing with notions of comfort and danger in the home, Wildman’s porcelain flame shaped nightlights are arranged into a map of major California wildfires. Juxtaposing the function of the nightlights as a source of comfort and safety in the dark with the omnipresent threat of disaster brought on by climate change, the generic object becomes a warning rather than a supportive aid. Wildman’s cast nightlights almost pass as the mass-produced objects they imitate, but they hover between mimesis and the uncanny in their oversize form and unusual quantity and placement.

Through material distortion, bodily references, and the specter of imminent environmental destruction, Wildman pushes his modified ceramic forms to a disquieting, dynamic, and incisive effect. Shattering the sterile connotations of his porcelain objects’ smooth surfaces, his work disrupts the discrete sanctity of home spaces and their conventions of safety and functionality.