I tend to work in short encounters with my wall compositions. These encounters are broken up into multiple focuses. For example I initially begin by producing five or so objects that will set the tone for a piece. Once that has been established, I work to make pieces that relate to or respond to those initial model objects. This process is usually a fast-paced process that is heavy handed and quick so I can keep my direction. I have a tendency to drift with objects in an evolutionary way. Works keep evolving and changing, and I keep it quick so I don't stray too far. Honestly, this pace also keeps my interest fresh and focused.

Once the building has finished and the surface has developed through firing and tooling, I am forced to deal with the objects as a group. This group is usually spread

1–2 Still Life (ocher), 4 ft. 2 in. (1.3 m) in height, ceramic and hardware, 2011.
out in front of me on a table or the floor. Just like the building process, I start with an initial piece. I plan for scale and think about the hanging mechanism. Beyond that, it becomes a call-and-response process with the pieces. One piece gets hung up or positioned on an armature, and I stare at it and then stare at the collection again. I look for objects that do a number of things. Some objects can build mass and create volume, some pieces create viewfinders that obscure or focus attention on pieces hidden beneath. I think the pieces relate to one another in the final composition; I just look for the right conversation between the pieces in the collection, and bring them together.

I'm fascinated with the idea and power that a collective body of objects can create. There is voice in a single object, but there is communication and conversation between multiple objects. I guess I look at my compositions as a way to create a conversation that exists within the...
There is the residue of my interaction and response to the objects as they develop into the group, and then there is the visual interaction that one can read among the objects. I would have to say that is the desire I work from; to create works that have a visual resonance between the individual parts of the whole.

My process for creating surfaces is a little bit backwards. I tend to initially work myself into a problem with surface. I make decisions that I’m unsure of and see what happens. I have a few base glaze recipes that I use, and from there, I add bits of this and bits of that to alter them. I don’t keep records and don’t bother to measure. I like the uncertainty of this process. It forces me to improvise and fix. This continual process of fixing is what leads to the complicated surfaces, layers of materials, and tooling. All of these things help create a surface that, like the completed pieces they are on, is layered and complex.

For inspiration, I enjoy going to the grocery store. The produce department is a wonderful place to window shop for forms and I am constantly inspired by the abundance of botanical plants and natural shapes and surfaces. Living in the central San Joaquin Valley in California, I’m surrounded by farmland. There is organic form and surface where ever you look. Growing up in this place has informed much of my understanding of form and surface. It’s a great place for visual stimulation and organic forms.

David Hicks received an MFA from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, in Alfred, New York. He is represented by Mindy Solomon Gallery, www.mindysolomon.com. To see more of his work, visit www.dh-studio.com. His work will also be on view at Cross Mackenzie Gallery (www.crossmackenzie.com) in Washington, DC, in January 2014.