

The Skirball Cultural Center presents

Common Ground
by Adam Silverman

A new acquisition and exhibition featuring 224 unique ceramic pieces created using organic materials from all fifty states, Washington D.C. and the five U.S. territories

FREE and Open to the Public
January 23, 2024–January 5, 2025



Adam Silverman with installation of Common Ground ceremonial pots at Grace Farms, New Canaan, CT.

Photo: Jacek Dolata, courtesy of Adam Silverman.

(Los Angeles, CA, January 16, 2024) The Skirball Cultural Center presents *Common Ground*, a community-activated artwork by Los Angeles-based artist Adam Silverman that celebrates American pluralism while also fostering human connection through shared meals and collaborative installations.

With the participation of nearly one hundred people from across the country, Silverman collected clay, water, and wood ash from all fifty American states, Washington DC, and the five inhabited US Territories (Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands). He then combined these materials to make a single, fully integrated, new material, erasing the borders of statehood and reimagining the country as a single, unified place. Silverman used this new combined material to make the glazes for *Common Ground*, which includes a tableware set of fifty-six plates, fifty-six bowls, fifty-six cups, as well as fifty-six ceremonial pots. The 224 objects are similar to one another in form, size, and composition, yet each is intentionally unique—just like each human being. The ceramics are intended as tools to facilitate conversation and build community.

A major new addition to the Skirball's permanent museum collection, *Common Ground* will be exhibited and activated throughout 2024, during which time Silverman will also serve as the Skirball's Artist in Residence. In collaboration with foodways scholar Dr. Scott Alves Barton and supported by local chefs as well as the Skirball's executive chef, Sean Sheridan, the Skirball will host a series of communal gatherings during this year-long exhibition, bringing people from different communities together using the plates, bowls, cups, and ceremonial pots that comprise *Common Ground*.

"The only thing you need to do to be qualified to touch this work of art is eat. It's radically inclusive," says Skirball Cultural Center President and CEO Jessie Kornberg. "Plenty of artists talk about engaging audiences. Adam literally brought hundreds of people together to make this work and now invites thousands more to be a part of the project through food and conversation. We are extremely fortunate that Adam chose the Skirball to be his partner in this project. Our mission aspires to build a greater understanding of our shared humanity through art and cultural experiences. The inclusion of *Common Ground* in our collection, campus experience, and programming, as well as Adam's residency here this year, do as much to further us towards that mission as any artist could."

“Presenting the work of contemporary artists that aims to foster human connection and understanding, particularly at a time of great division in our country, is essential to the realization of the Skirball’s purpose,” commented Sheri Bernstein, Skirball Cultural Center Museum Director. “In presenting *Common Ground*, we hope to help bridge political, cultural, and socioeconomic differences by bringing people together through the universal language of food.”

“We are honored to welcome Adam Silverman as our artist in residence and Dr. Scott Alves Barton as our food curator this year,” said Vicki Phung Smith, Associate Curator. “Together, we endeavor to bring this extraordinary work to life to communities throughout Los Angeles through shared meals and experiences, including dinners with their own distinct themes and menus, and creative and immersive public programs and educational opportunities.”

Artist Adam Silverman remarked, “My goal for *Common Ground* was to find an institutional partner whose mission closely aligns with that of the project. The Skirball couldn’t be a more perfect fit and I’m thrilled to be spending 2024 as Artist in Residence to introduce visitors to *Common Ground* and show the richness that results when we celebrate both the diversity and commonality of people who live in this country.”

Common Ground is FREE and open to the public, on display in the Ruby Commons, adjacent to Zeidler’s Cafe. The exhibition opens today, January 23, 2024 and will remain on view through January 5, 2025.

For more information please visit: <https://www.skirball.org/museum/common-ground>

Common Ground and its related educational programs at the Skirball Cultural Center are made possible through the generous support of Kayne Family Foundation, Nancy Lainer, and Julia Stewart Family Charitable Fund, along with support from Mona Abadir and Raskin Family Foundation.

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About Adam Silverman

Known for his sculptural vessels, richly expressionistic glazes, and engagement with locally foraged materials, Adam Silverman is among the most thoughtful and dynamic practitioners dedicated to ceramics today. Silverman's training in architecture is often evident in his ambitious installations and the structural clarity and precariousness of his objects. He develops and utilizes personal, exploratory techniques to glaze and fire his works. Silverman was born in 1963 in New York, NY, and received a Bachelor of Fine Art and a Bachelor of Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1987 and 1988. He lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Silverman's work is included in the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Ibaraki Ceramic Art Museum, Kasama, Japan; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, OR; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Palm Springs Art Museum, CA; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI; Shiga Museum of Art, Otsu City, Japan; Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA; and the Yale Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. Throughout the 2024 calendar year, Adam Silverman will be the Skirball's Artist in Residence, participating in programming with the Skirball team and the broader Los Angeles community.

About Dr. Scott Alves Barton:

Dr. Scott Alves Barton is a foodways scholar with a twenty-five-year career as an executive chef, consultant, and culinary educator. He holds a PhD in food studies from New York University and is a cultural anthropologist of African diaspora foodways at the University of Notre Dame. His research, films, and publications focus on the intersection of secular and sacred cuisine as a marker of identity politics, feminine agency, cultural heritage, political resistance, and self-determination in Northeastern Brazil. During his professional culinary career, Dr. Barton was named one of the top twenty-five best African/African American chefs by *Ebony* magazine. He is on the board of the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition, and the African Diaspora Religions Committee of the American Academy of Religion. He is also a member of the James Beard Foundation Cookbook Awards committee and an advisor to the Indigo Arts Alliance. Dr. Barton has been a fellow at the Instituto Sacatar, the Fundação Palmares in Brazil, the Institute for Critical Investigation at Vanderbilt University, the Tepoztlán Institute for Transnational History of the Americas, and is an ongoing fellow at Lynden Sculpture Garden in Milwaukee.

About the Skirball

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

Visiting the Skirball

The Skirball is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00 pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10:00 am–5:00 pm; closed Mondays and holidays. Admission to the Skirball's current exhibition, *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement* includes General Admission. Special Pricing: \$18 General; \$15 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$13 Children 2–12. *RECLAIMED: A Family Painting* and *The American Library* by Yinka Shinobare CBE RA will be included with admission to *This Light of Ours*,

or as part of General Admission: \$12 General; \$9 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$7 Children 2–12. Note: Streamlined ticket prices will go into effect March 1, providing access to all exhibitions as part of General Admission: \$18 General, \$13 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children 2-17. Exhibitions are always FREE to Skirball Members and Children under 2. The permanent exhibition Noah’s Ark at the Skirball is ticketed separately. Advance timed-entry reservations are recommended. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit skirball.org.