Lea Zoltowski Ertz is originally from Pennsylvania. She received her BFA in Ceramics from Alfred University, New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred, New York and her MFA in Ceramics from Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. She was an Artist-in-Residence and Instructor at the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Newcastle, Maine, and Artist-in-Residence and Instructor at Arrowmount School of Arts & Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Lea has exhibited her artwork nationally and internationally and has pieces in collections in China and England. She is currently a full time studio artist along with her teaching duties at the University of Denver.

Guilt and Desire: I create deceptively innocent sculptures to reveal and critique societal power structures. These powers can be physical, intellectual, emotive, financial, aesthetic taste making, social political, and sexual. Unhappiness and complacency develops when one feels powerless, but I believe any person or object can be made powerful through heightened perceptual awareness. By creating an awareness of primal, pleasure-seeking bodily impulses and the learned repression of them, I can destabilize fixed notions of social taboos and performative behavior.

Hunger and the Fear of Contamination: Viewer comfort level and interaction varies according to cultural background, education, gender, and age all defining what cultural taboos or tasteful boundaries have been violated. Because the average man takes only seven seconds to find a person or object desirable, it is essential to instigate and prolong curiosity. I use humor, bright, playful colors and the literal taste of chocolate and sweets to increase accessibility and encourage one to lower their guard. This mouth-watering desire is offset by the fear of moral and edible contamination. I incite viewer discomfort and empowerment by encouraging socially taboo participatory reactions and bodily interfaces. I want to question passive spectatorship of art and by extension media and life. Real and implied interactions include smelling, tasting, picking up and using, destroying, or winning to take with you as a souvenir. 'Viewing' this work necessarily destroys, consumes, and subverts viewing expectations and passive complacency.

In Taste Your Luck, I am presenting a visual feast evoking a sense of wonder about who and what is being served. Who are we and what is required to sate our hunger? Taste Your Luck is covered with decadent Belgian white and dark chocolate tongues. The tongues have embedded mylar moralizing fortunes & chances to win souvenir versions of The Bone sculpture. The viewer casts judgment upon the sculpture and in return you too are judged. The smell of Belgian chocolate entices mouth watering, but does the fear of contamination stop you from biting into a tongue? Do the surveillance cameras overhead or crowd control stop one from biting off all of the tongues and in doing so winning all of the sculptures? An attendant is on hand at the interactive opening reception to ensure biting only not touching. The aftermath of bitten tongues with voyeuristically exposed fortunes remains on view the remainder of the exhibition.
Taste Your Luck, 2012, earthenware, leather, mdf, chrome, chocolate tongues with embedded fortunes (in background: wall pieces by Mia Mulvey)