



## Molly Hatch's *Mon Plaisir* Ceramics Takes a Two-Dimensional Turn

**B**OTH MOLLY HATCH EXHIBITIONS (AT THE JANE Hartsook Gallery, New York and at the Ferrin Gallery at Art Miami) featured *Mon Plaisir*, her series of baroquesque porcelain objects. The Massachusetts-based artist/designer showed five works in New York. The exhibition featured editioned chairs and plates, three unique paintings, and ceramic sculpture. At her opening, Hatch remarked, "I want to blur the lines between what is an object and what is a drawing. I wanted ceramics to 'read' as two-dimensional."

*Comtesse de Marsan et Mon. Genet* shows a Baroque gentleman's profile as he faces a lady. The drawn and coloured ceramic figures are in front of a colourful drawing of a garden scene in which the same two figures are shown as shadows. The porcelain is mid-range-fired cone 6; the glassy waxiness of the mature porcelain is painted with low-fired underglaze finished with a matte glaze. This finish gives the porcelain figures the same hues or colour values as the drawing behind it.

This same technique is used for *Mme. Elizabeth et Mon. Artois*, which shows a gentleman in a 3/4 length coat escorting a lady with a full-skirted red dress with flounces. Both figures have elaborate hair styles. The setting behind them shows a court scene. *Count Fersen, Mlle Lamballe et Mlle Polignac* shows

a gentleman facing one lady with a red dress and a blue overdress as a lady with a fan turns to her right, away from the pair. The background setting is a court scene. All three figure groups in this series show courtly behaviour and dress. The novelty is that each group has been taken out of its original setting and handbuilt in ceramics.

*Baroque Garden* is a series of 45 earthenware glazed plates (five rows with nine plates each) that, together, present an 18th century architectural scene. It is reminiscent of Vaux le Vicompte or an elegant chateau and its grounds. From the other side of the room, the plates looked almost like a coloured drawing. Even though the plates were hung so that the drawings on each add up to show perspective and depth, the reference to dinner plates was equally strong and interrupted any reading of the work as a complete landscape. The duality of *Baroque Garden* made it simultaneously modern and old fashioned, rectangular and round, two and three-dimensional.

*Baroque Chairs*, the last pairing in this show, were hand-painted canvas slipcovers over two wide-seated armchairs. Each chair's cover had detailed black renderings of ornate carving and embossing that could grace a baroque armchair. The chairs, in a way, illustrated the 'conceit' of the exhibition; the covers flatten heavy dimensional furniture in a surprising way.

*A Review by Jan Garden Castro*



The Ferrin Gallery exhibition at Art Miami, similar in style to the porcelain figures and Baroque plates, sold out during the Art Miami fair. Hatch is not inventing the scenarios she depicts but is borrowing them from existing period pieces. What she adds is her ability to draw, to craft ceramic art, to invent new conceits and to add humour. Molly Hatch reminds viewers of the importance of ceramics in life during the Age of Enlightenment. As she turns ceramic objects into figures and literally detaches them from their bases, she shows one way that porcelain can become art.

Facing page: **Baroque Garden**. 2011. Forty-five ceramic plates hand painted with underglaze. Edition of 3. 50 x 90 in.

Top left: **Count Fersen, Mlle. Lambraille et Mlle. Polignac**. 2011. Gouache painting on paper with porcelain figure. Drawing: 28.5 x 22.5 in. Porcelain: 8 x 12 x 2 in.

Top right: **Comtesse de Marsan et Mon. Genet**. 2011. Gouache painting on paper with Porcelain figure. Painting: 16 x 20 in. Porcelain: 5.5 x 7 x 2 in. Left: **Plate, Baroque Garden (Detail)**.

Above: **Baroque Chair**. 2011. Ready made chair and oil paint.

All above photos courtesy of Ferrin Gallery.

Right: **Portrait of Molly Hatch in the kitchen of her home**. 2011. Florence, Massachusetts, US.



Jan Garden Castro is a New York-based contributing editor for Sculpture Magazine and is the author of *The Art & Life of Georgia O'Keeffe* and *Sonia Delaunay: La Moderne*. The Jane Hartsook Gallery at Greenwich House Pottery is online at [www.greenwich-housepottery.org](http://www.greenwich-housepottery.org) and the Ferrin Gallery is online at [www.FerrinGallery.com](http://www.FerrinGallery.com). More information about the artist's work is at [www.mollyhatch.com](http://www.mollyhatch.com).