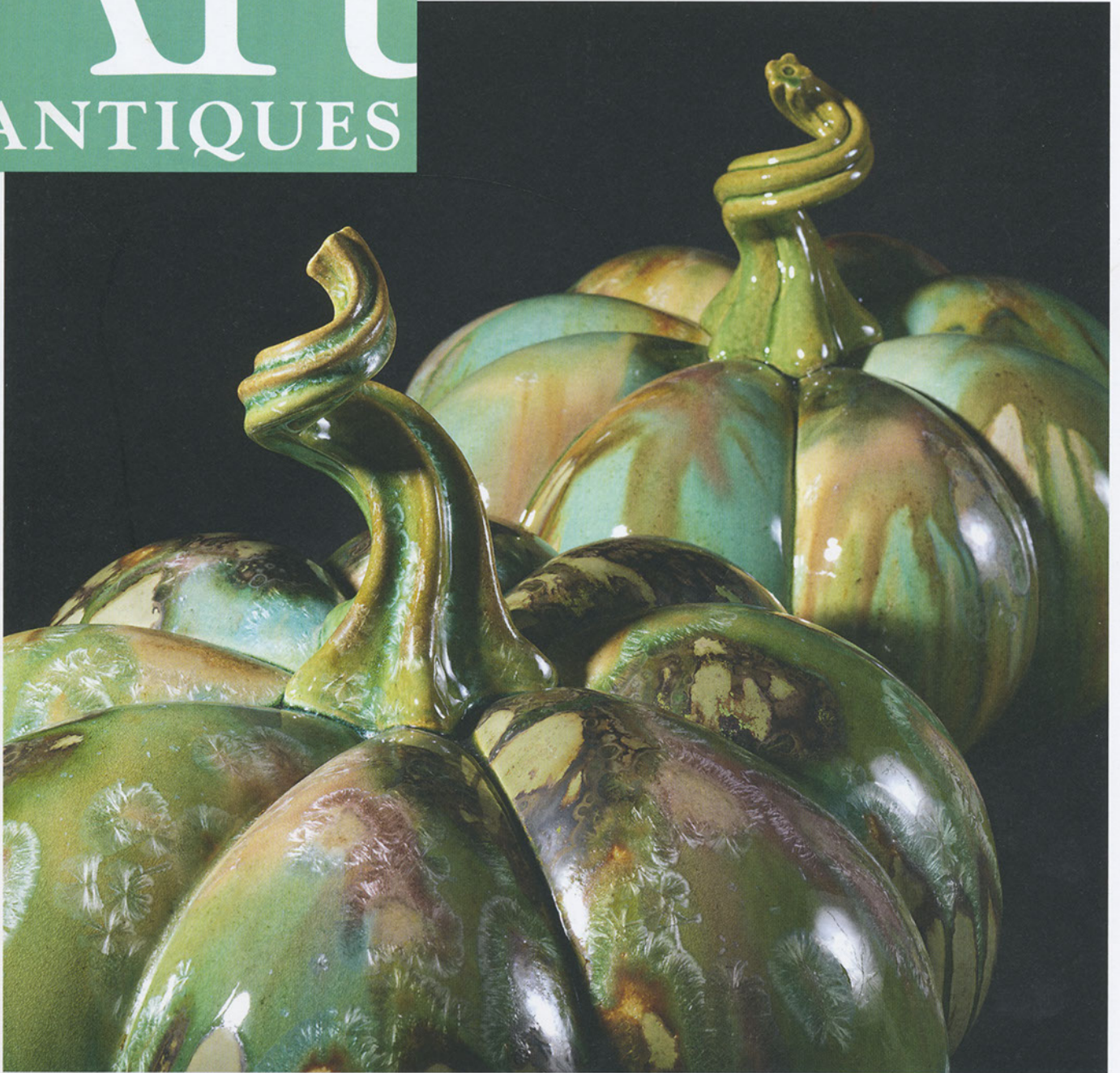


Art & ANTIQUES

OCTOBER 20

FOR COLLECTORS OF THE FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS



GRANT WOOD | THE ART OF DRAWING | STEPHEN HUNECK | CHATSWORTH'S ATTIC SALE



ORGANIC CERAMIC

organic



ceramic

BERNARD PALISSY MADE PORCELAIN
COME ALIVE IN THE 16TH CENTURY,
AND NATURE'S FORMS CONTINUE TO
INSPIRE ARTISTS IN CLAY TODAY.

WHEN GROUPS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE BROUGHT TO THE Wallace Collection, the jewel of a London museum that was once the private collection of Sir Richard Wallace, they are always shown the collection's finest piece of Palissy. They ooh and ah over the chillingly lifelike snake that slithers under a gleaming glaze across the platter, they point to the lobster crawling into the corner and the lithe lizard rushing to escape him. The 500-year-old dish is a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

There is something about clay, when it's fired and glazed, that embodies the essence of nature more than any other medium—be it a piece that's a half-millennium-old piece or one made two months ago. We're reminded of that this autumn with a choice selection of exhibitions that, between them, celebrate five centuries of the organic ceramic.

Starting in Paris at the Louvre des Antiquaires (September 15–December 24), there's a full tribute to the Renaissance-era artist Bernard Palissy, and those who have come to be known as his “followers,” centuries' worth of imitators who did



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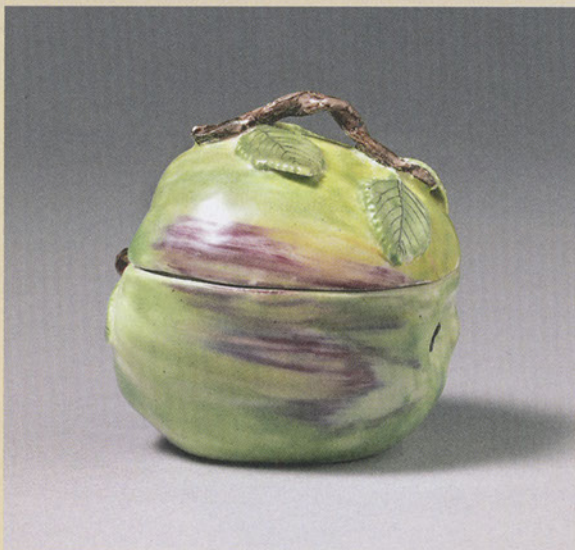
By Sallie Brady

their own versions of his distinctive organic style. The exhibition is organized by a contemporary Palissy ware artist, Christine Viennet, in conjunction with the release of her book *A Tribute to Bernard Palissy and His Followers from the XVIth to the XXth Century* (Fantoni) and the dealer Vincent L'Herrou.

Born in 1510 in France, Palissy was a true Renaissance man—an ecologist, land-surveyor, chemist, goldsmith, and geologist before he became an artist. Obsessed with nature, he gently killed frogs, snakes and crabs and made casts of them, as well as of shells, leaves and flowers. These he attached to his pottery and metal dishes. Palissy painted his works in nature's colors and perfected enamels and lead glazes that simulated the seabed, natural marble and water trickling over moss-covered pebbles. Even Catherine de' Medici, then the queen of France, took notice of his work and commissioned a grotto, one of Palissy's specialties, in the gardens of the Tuileries palace.

Palissy became famous in Paris for his pottery and for his lectures on natural history, but in Catholic France during the Wars of Religion, his staunch Protestant faith landed him in the Bastille, where he died of starvation in 1589. His martyrdom would later help fuel his popularity during the Victorian era.

The existence of Palissy's Paris studio was confirmed in the mid-1980s, when excavations for renovations of the Louvre uncovered his workshop and more than 10,000 ceramic fragments. Suzanne Higgott, a curator at the Wallace Collection, says that scientific tests done on those fragments are changing attributions. "There are very few pieces that can actually be attributed to him," says Higgott. "It's even questionable if our piece can be attributed to him."



Previous spread, from left: The Wallace Collection's platter, safely attributed to a Follower of Bernard Palissy (1510-1590), possibly France late 16th century, earthenware, lead-glazed with moulded and applied decoration. Right: A Chelsea strawberry leaf moulded sauceboat with a green branch handle with strawberry flowers, painted with sprays of roses, convolvulus, and lilies, 1755, at the Brian Haughton Gallery. This page, clockwise from left: An extremely rare Bow apple box and cover, applied with a twisted twig handle, 1755. A rare pair of large Worcester partridge sauce tureens and covers, copied from the Meissen form, 1755. An extremely rare pair of Sceaux Faience asparagus boxes and covers, each formed as a bundle of blanched spears, 1760. All 18th-century pieces with London's Brian Haughton Gallery. Opposite: Contemporary Palissy ware by Christine Viennet.



While pieces were made “in the manner of Palissy” by assistants in his workshops, then by followers of his style in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, Palissy mania truly took hold in the 19th century, when ceramicist Charles Jean Avisseau, father of Palissy’s Tours followers, began working, along with Victor Barbizet of the Paris school and Bordalla Pinheiro and Mafra in Portugal, creating what is now called Palissy ware.

“There were a lot of elements that lead to this revival,” says Higgott. “You have Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* published in 1859. You have Ruskin’s drawings and writings on naturalism. You have the overall popularity of naturalism.” The fact that Palissy was a scientist who had published learned writings and an autobiography, made him a natural to be rediscovered by the Victorians, who seemed to recreate everything. Interest in his naturalism was followed by a revival of his organic ceramic techniques and artistry. Higgott says that Palissy’s conviction about his beliefs and his dramatic ending upped his appeal.

These days, collectors say the number of dealers handling Palissy and Palissy ware have decreased

greatly over the years, as supply has diminished. In New York, Linda Horn still handles pieces, as does Passage Antiques in New Orleans. One of Paris’ top dealers is Galerie Vauclair. While original Palissy pieces are incredibly rare, ironically, dealers say, it’s the 19th-century pieces that are the most popular. Laurence Vauclair, who has been selling Palissy wares for 20 years from her gallery, says the original Palissy pieces that turn up now tend to be of a religious nature—he did work outside of the natural themes—and are only of interest to serious collectors and museums. “A regular Palissy plate with a snake might be €5,000, and a 19th-century one might be €3,500,” says Vauclair. “Pieces by Charles Avisseau tend to me the most expensive. Avisseau really is the market, with pieces from €10,000 to €30,000.”

Viennet, the artist and collector, agrees that age does not dictate price. “I just bought a 17th-century metal plate with a rustic fish for €800. Nineteenth-century pieces would be more expensive.” Viennet owns more than 500 pieces, which she exhibits in

a museum located on the grounds of her vineyard, Château de Raissac





Opposite: Platter, school of Palissy, made in France last quarter of 16th century, lead-glazed earthenware, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This page: Above: From the 19th-century Tours followers of Palissy, a platter with serpent by Joseph Landais. Below: Detail of Christine Vienne's naturalistic Palissy-inspired mouldings.



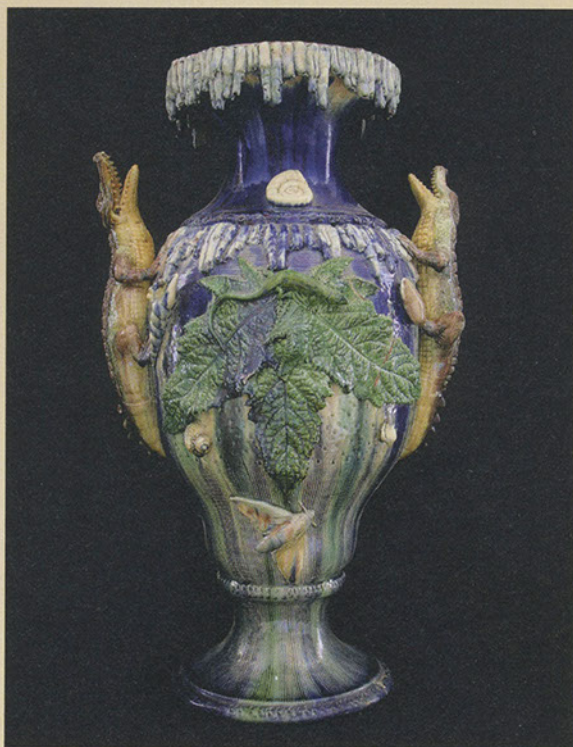
ORGANIC CERAMIC

in Beziers. Her own pieces, which are riveting, color-soaked recreations of ocean dramas, bustling riverbeds and insects inspecting woodland floors, are also popular with collectors. She has sold in the United States through the Lacoste and Ferrin galleries in Massachusetts, as well as at Bergdorf Goodman. "Marine Creatures," a special exhibition of her work will be up this autumn in Paris at Galerie Jean-François Heim (November 24–December 15).

Other contemporary Palissy followers include Geoffrey Luff, an Englishman based in France, who very much follows the master's tradition of creature-packed plates, bowls and candelabra. Less obvious influences can be found in the work of South African artists Bernard Zondo and Jabu Nene, who show at New York's Amaridian gallery and at the SOFA fairs. Their hand-painted ceramics include stately urns adorned with casts of roaring leopards snarling amid the flora and fauna. Ceramicist Mara Superior says she channeled Palissy in her recent Italian series, shown at the Ferrin Gallery, which whimsically included elements of the Italian dinner table and countryside in relief on plates and platters.

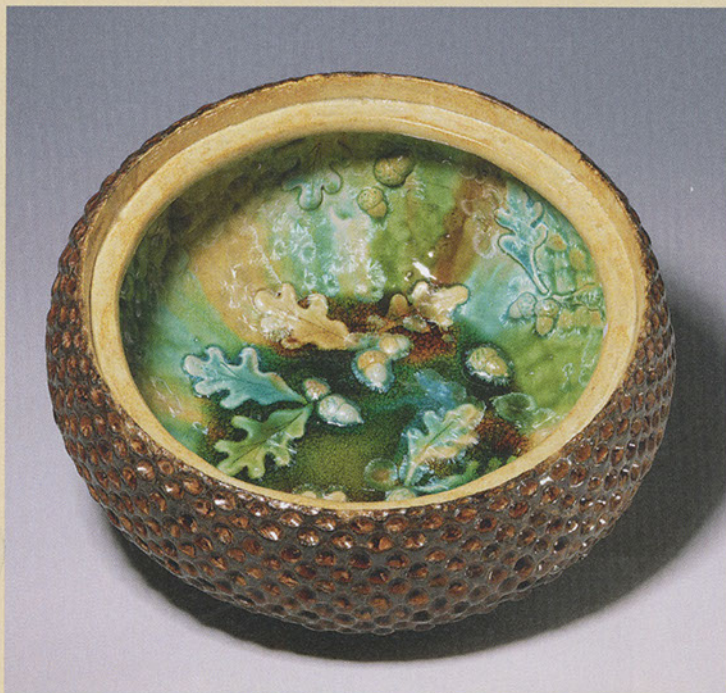
Anyone interested in seeing Palissy's works can find them at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Getty, the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art, the Wallace Collection, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Louvre, and at Paris' Musée Nationale de la Céramique, which is also hosting "Homage à Bernard Palissy," through January 10, 2011. Many pieces in U.S. museum collections came from the famous Berwind collection of Renaissance pottery, put together during the peak of interest in the late Victorian period. The family's Newport summer home, The Elms, was designed to showcase the collection. Many of the pieces were gifted in the 1950s from the family to institutions, and others sold later at public auction.

Independent of Palissy's influence, luscious fruits, vegetables, and wild animals began showing up in the finest 18th-century German and English dining rooms. Paul Crane, a ceramics specialist at London's Brian



Above: Palissy ware from the 19th-century Paris school: an urn by Victor Barbizet. Below: Two views of *A Really Large Acorn Box*,

2010, crystalline-glazed stoneware, by Kate Malone. Opposite: *Curly Whirly Boab Lidded Box*, 2009, crystalline-glazed stoneware, by Kate Malone. Malone pieces with the Adrian Sassoon Gallery.



COURTESY OF "A TRIBUTE TO BERNARD PALISSY," COURTESY OF ADRIAN SASSOON



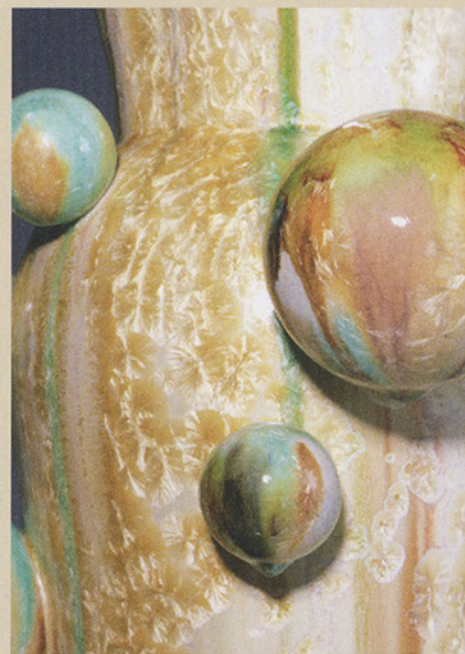
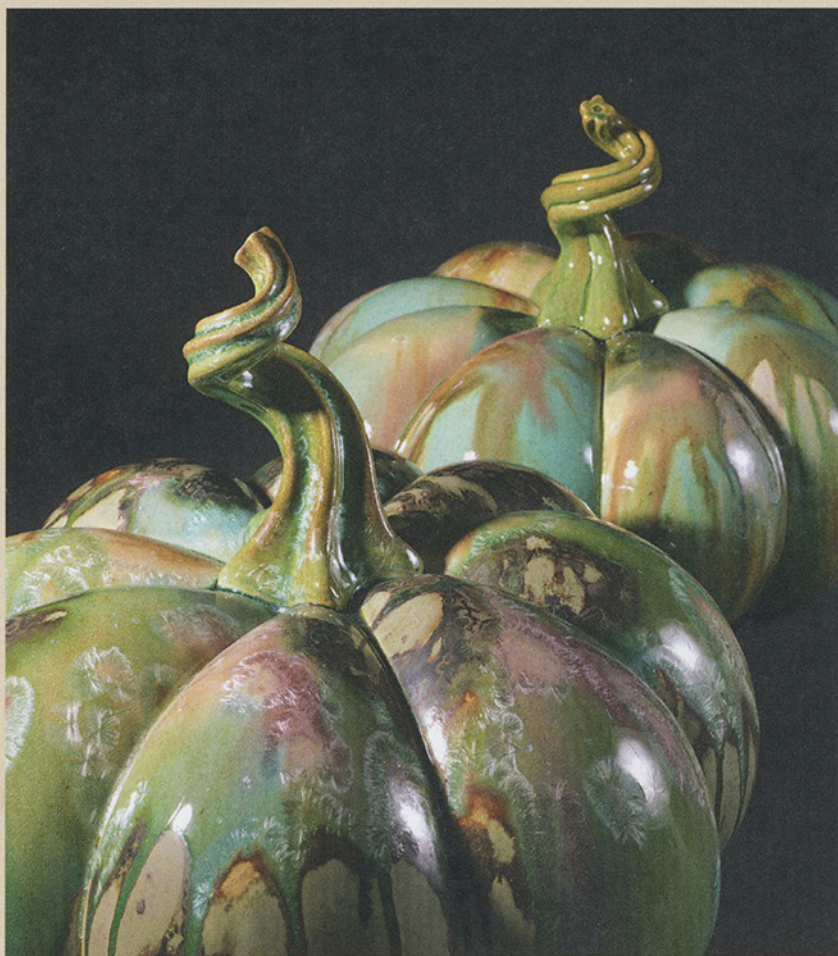
ORGANIC CERAMIC

Haughton Gallery, which specializes in English and European ceramics from the 16th through 19th centuries, says natural forms first appeared in silver before they showed up in porcelain; an early example, from 1743, was a crayfish salt. The Germans were making flora and fauna first, at Meissen, but a critical moment occurred when Sir Charles Handbury-Williams, an English diplomat, was abroad and left a note for his friend who was house-sitting to let the folks over at the Chelsea factory have a look at his diplomatic gift collection of German porcelain. It wasn't long before Chelsea was making partridge tureens and English hen-and-cock partridge dishes.

"It was the age of the Rococo," says Crane, "and it was man's triumph over nature that fueled the fashion." Painted porcelain melons, figs, apples and cabbages began littering elaborate dinner tables. "Literally the tables groaned with the products of hot-houses," says Crane, explaining that nature and the natural world were important themes for dining and display and the overall theater of food. Pieces from the gallery's recent "A Taste of Ele-

gance" exhibition will be on view this month at the International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show (October 22–28) in New York (see page 34).

That era's elaborate tables, dripping with sugared flowers and crystallized fruit, inspire the latest work of contemporary ceramicist Chris Antemann, whose works feature naughty 18th-century dandies and their lascivious ladies in rompy scenes such as the outdoor *Feast of Impropriety* and *Apple Tree Picnic* (both from 2010) layered with fruits and flowers and floral patterns. "I choose this medium, porcelain, because it was the big medium of the period," says the Oregon-based artist. "I've been reading *Fired by Passion*, the new three-volume book that the Met published on the Viennese porcelain of the Du Paquier factory, and have been learning all about how entertaining was meant to be witty and decorative, and was frequently outdoors." Antemann's work will be up next month at SOFA Chicago (November 5–7) and at Art Miami (December 1–5) with the Ferrin Gallery. Next year, she will be a guest at Meissen doing special editions and will



This page, left: *A Large Pumpkin*, 2008, crystalline-glazed stoneware, limited edition of 12, by Kate Malone. Above and opposite page: *Anatomic Lady Gourd*, 2010, crystalline-glazed stoneware, by Kate Malone. Both pieces with the Adrian Sassoon Gallery.


COURTESY OF ADRIAN SASSOON

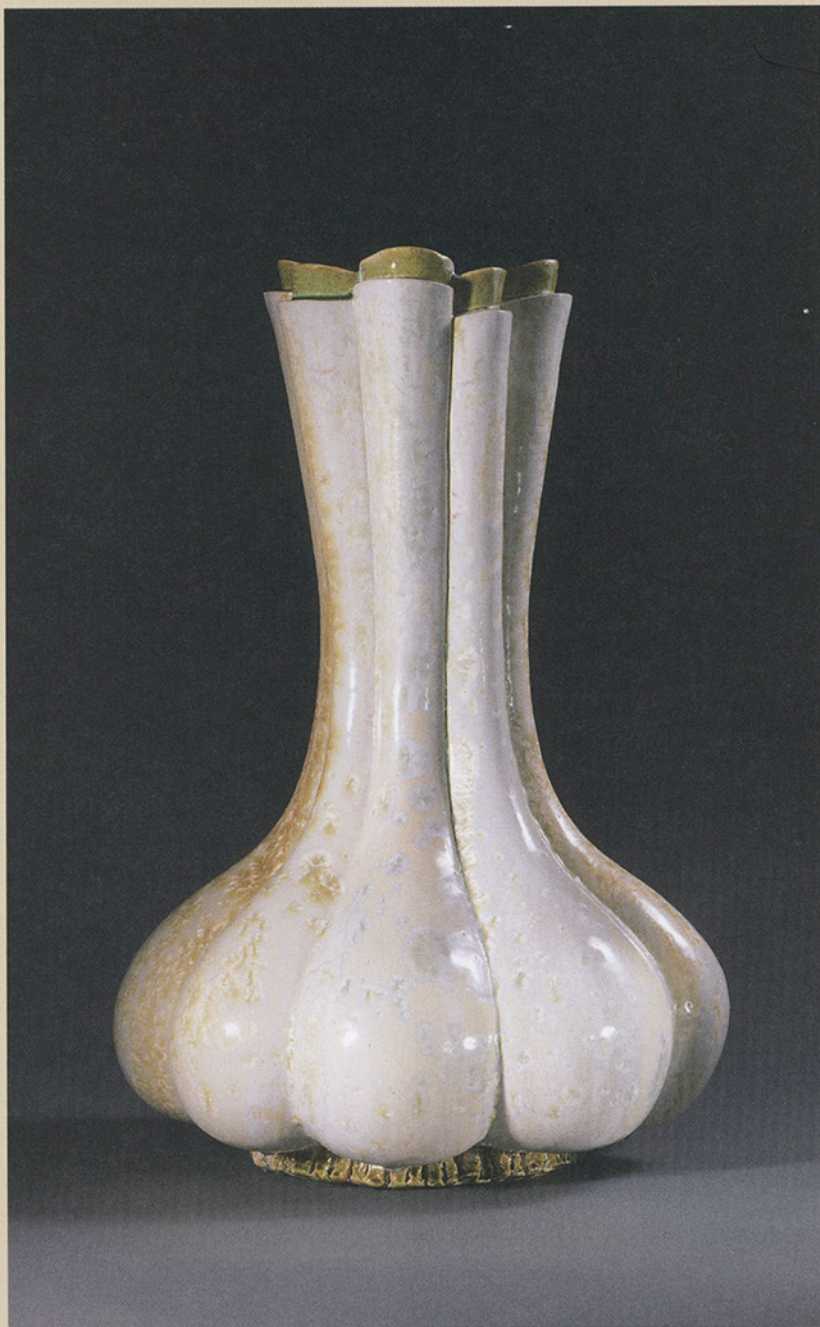


have a special installation—a play on the dinner party—at London's Courtauld Institute of Art during FRIEZE week.

One of the top ceramicists working today is so devoted to the organic that she jokingly calls herself “Mother Nature.” So ripe and naturalistic are Kate Malone's pots that one wonders if she fashioned a gourd into a pot or if a pot was fashioned into a gourd. Her clay blackberries, garlic bulbs, pineapples and pumpkins swell to the peak of ripeness under all-natural mineral glazes made from copper, cobalt, manganese and iron—she has 1,000 recipes in all—that are fired hot—over-fired, in fact—so the glazes run and ooze over the forms as the pigments pop and the excess glaze drips into trays beneath the pots. “I like the colors the natural minerals make,” says Malone, “greens, blues and honeys. While I'm not directly inspired by Palissy, I think we're both inspired by glazes and the way glazes can enhance clay forms that relate to nature.”

Next month, a long-awaited solo exhibition, her first in seven years, “Kate Malone: New Work” (November 3–19) will go up at London's Robilant + Voena gallery, also sponsored by her worldwide dealer Adrian Sassoon. Work from Malone's studio in Barcelona, Provence and London—where late this summer she was making her first-ever series of monumental pots, numbering six—will be for sale. Her pieces range from £100 for a rattle to £100,000 for a swimming pool, she says. She also shows with Adrian Sassoon at this month's Pavilion of Art & Design Fair in London (October 13–17) and at TEFAF Maastricht (March 18–27, 2011). Her work is in LACMA, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Ashmolean Museum. The Duke of Devonshire owns three of her pots.

Finally, for another taste of organic talent blossoming abroad, visit the MATERIAL poetry exhibition, which brings the works of contemporary Irish artists to New York. Ceramics, sculpture and furniture will be among the offerings curated by Brian Kennedy, on view at the American Irish Historical Society (October 8 to November 18). Among the artists showing is ceramicist Frances Lambe, whose wonderfully quiet rounded sculptures could easily have washed up from the Irish Sea. 



Above: A White Garlic Vase, 2010, crystalline-glazed stoneware by Kate Malone.
Opposite: A Large Lidded Barcelona Fern Box, 2010, crystalline-glazed stoneware,
by Kate Malone. Both pieces with the Adrian Sassoon Gallery.

