

KATHY BUTTERLY, LOUIS FRATINO,  
MAGALIE GUÉRIN, HEIDI LAU  
DIFFICULTY IS CHEERFULLY ACCEPTED  
02.21–04.05.25

“... it is the glory of the craft that a difficulty is cheerfully accepted if in the overcoming there is found success.”

Sikkema Malloy Jenkins is pleased to present *Difficulty is cheerfully accepted*, a presentation of ceramic sculptural works by Kathy Butterly, Louis Fratino, Magalie Guérin, and Heidi Lau. The title of the exhibition comes from a quote by Charles Fergus Binns in his 1910 guidebook, *The Potters Craft: A Practical Guide for the Studio and Workshop*, in which he describes the process of producing Delftware. *Difficulty is cheerfully accepted* is on view in the back galleries from February 21 through April 5, 2025. A public opening reception with the artists will be held on Friday, February 21, from 6–8pm.

Kathy Butterly’s sculptures wield the traditions of studio ceramics towards an expansive vision of color, material, and mood. What begins as a uniform shape or conventional vessel is subsequently transformed through distinct contortions and manipulations, adding personality to the clay’s base form. Multiple rounds of glazing and firing—sometimes up to thirty rounds—allow Butterly to build volume and continuously develop lively interactions of coloration and texture. Belying their intimate scale, the resulting bodies have an iconoclastic, multifaceted presence.

Louis Fratino initiated his first experiments with terracotta sculptures and bas reliefs in 2019, during a residency in Albissola, Italy—a town famed for its ceramic traditions and clay-rich landscape. His latest series of painted ceramics invoke the intimacy and attenuation seen in his previous carved tableaux, while further articulating his interest in descriptive painting as

decoration. Fratino notes the polychrome terracotta Tanagra figurines of the fourth century BC as another influence on his new works, particularly in their naturalistic tinting and quotidian subject matter. The desire, tenderness, and sense of communion that pervade his paintings now languidly envelope his ceramic bodies, accented with swathes of color and drawn patterns.

This exhibition is the first time Magalie Guérin’s new ceramics are presented in a gallery. Guérin views these recent works as a natural evolution of her painting and drawing practice, and her foundational interest in iteration and translation. Through her sculptures, she seeks to explore how the context of a two-dimensional composition may be embodied in three dimensions. Areas of rich color, raised edges, palpable textures, and amorphous shapes are re-adapted onto the sculptural body, allowing for new narratives of recognition and subjective meaning.

For Heidi Lau, clay is both a material and a conduit—a temporal medium with the ability to embody the past within our physical present. Her hand-built formations, ranging from small-scale figures to totemic structures, draw influence from Chinese landscape art and Taoist mythology. Earthen glazing, rippling folds, and jeweled ornamentation suggest the likeness of organic bodies or overgrown ruins, caught between decay and renewal. Rather than mere containers or indicators of presence, Lau’s sculptures point to more permeable, anti-categorical imaginings of time and space.

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Kathy Butterly (b. 1963, Amityville, NY) received her BFA from the Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, PA (1986) and her MFA from the University of California, Davis, CA (1990). Her work will be the subject of a major survey show at the Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College, in 2026. Butterly has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants including a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant (2017), a Guggenheim Fellowship Award (2014), a Smithsonian American Art Museum's Contemporary Artist Award (2012), a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2011), and a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2009). Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; and The Whitney Museum, New York, NY, among others.

Louis Fratino (b. 1993, Annapolis, MD) received his BFA in Painting with a concentration in Illustration from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD (2015). His first institutional solo exhibition, *Louis Fratino. Saturra*, is on view at Centro Pecci in Prato, Italy, through May 11. In 2024, his work was included in *Stranieri Ovunque—Foreigners Everywhere*, the 60th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, curated by Adriano Pedrosa. Fratino is the recipient of a Fulbright Research Fellowship in Painting, Berlin (2015-16) and a Yale Norfolk Painting Fellowship, Norfolk, CT (2014). His work is found in the public collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; and the Whitney Museum, New York, NY.

Magalie Guérin (b. Montréal, 1973) received her MFA in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago in 2011. Solo exhibitions of her work include presentations at Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto (2024, 2020), Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago (2022) and Amanda Wilkinson, London (2020), among others. Her work is included in the public collections of the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, Québec City, Canada; Collection Hydro-Québec, Montréal, Canada; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL; and the Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY. She is the recipient of two Pollock-Krasner grants (2024, 2018), a Pace Award for a mid-career painter at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown (2019) and a Chinati Foundation residency (2018).

Heidi Lau grew up in Macau and lives and works in New York. In 2021, she was the inaugural artist-in-residence at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Her installation *Gardens as Cosmic Terrains* was exhibited in the Cemetery catacombs in 2022 and drew from her ongoing research on *Shan Hai Jing (Classic of Mountains and Seas)* and the cosmological settings of Chinese gardens. In 2019, her exhibition *Apparition* was presented at the Macau-China Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale. Lau is one of six artists shortlisted for the M+ Museum's Sigg Prize 2025 and will be featured in an exhibition with the other finalists in September 2025. Her work is included in the public collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Macao Museum of Art, and the M+ Museum in Hong Kong.

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