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Jane Irish

Faience & Firenze

March 6 through April 11, 2015

Artist's Reception:

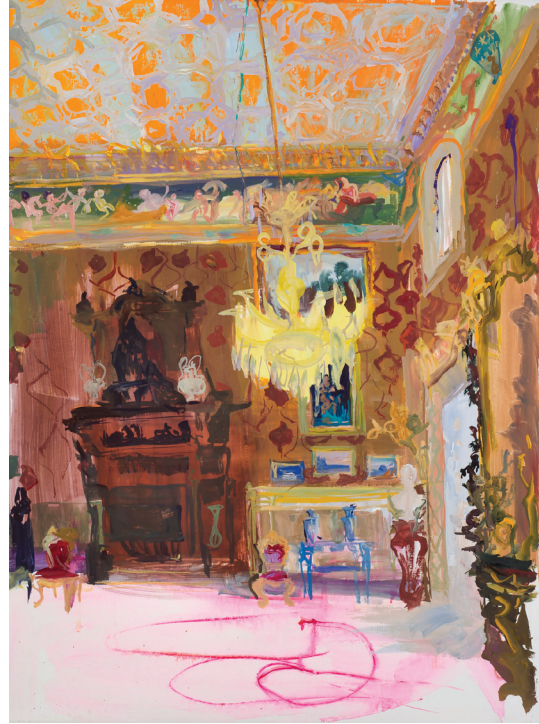
Friday, March 6, 5:30–7:30 pm

Gallery hours:

Tue–Sat: 10 am–6 pm

Locks Gallery is pleased to present *Faience & Firenze*, a solo exhibition of new ceramics and recent gouache paintings by Jane Irish. A reception for the artist will be held on March 6, 2015 from 5:30 to 7:30pm.

Irish's 2014/15 ceramic vessels are a new shape for the artist: a wide mouth vase of the artist's own creation. While taking inspiration from Asian designs, they also mimic a cirque (an amphitheater-like mountain valley). Continuing her interest in the legacy of the Vietnam war, this shape is symbolic of the conflict-ridden landscape of Vietnam, and the natural amphitheater settings in which the American anti-war protest movement chose to rally and march.



Jane Irish, *Il Salone Delle Feste, Museo Stibbert*, 2013
gouache on Tyvek

Her painted glazes combine imagery from the Vietnamese landscape, architecture, the war, and American politics, alongside a combination of decorative art motifs which are a continual source of study for Irish. “Faience” is a French word for Italian opaque-painted earthenware, which has become a globally adopted term, comprising ceramic traditions from Egypt to Vietnam.

As part of her artistic research, Irish travels to study decorative art and art historically rich interiors around the world. Galvanized by a (now infamous) 2004 essay in the *Village Voice* by Jerry Saltz, Irish stopped working from photographs for her paintings nearly 10 years ago. Now working in gouache, she has returned to her formal training working en plain air, visiting sites to make energetic works in inspired color palettes.

While planning for her more political works, Irish continues to paint romantic and opulent domestic interiors. Taking cues from anthropology, Irish states, “I like to study up, not study down,” making wealth and the architecture of power a specimen to be studied.

[continued on reverse]

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Irish asks us to consider the rise of nationalism after “failed” wars and cultural amnesia towards colonial histories through her examination of the decorative arts.

After many years of studying French design, Irish has shifted her gaze to Italy, a land she describes as “foreign territory” but an important “return to the source of painting.” In 2013, Irish visited Florence (Firenze) at the invitation of writer and curator Carl Brandon Strehlke to study the Medici palaces, palazzos, baroque interiors, and lavish sculpture gardens. Irish has previously exhibited landscape paintings from Vietnam but this is the first time her garden paintings will be exhibited at the gallery.

On view are two vases, one created in 2008 and the other an updated version created in 2015. On the 2008 version, Jane Irish includes a poem written by Thomas Devaney. This collaboration is of Irish’s many collaborations with art historians, writers and poets. After the vase was created, Devaney wrote a revised version of his “War Vase,” in order to further continue this dialogue with the artist. In turn, Irish created a new vase, this time including the newer iteration of the poem. Both pieces will be seen on view side by side, along with her engaging preparatory sketches for new ceramic pieces.

Faience & Firenze asks viewers to shift their gaze: as they move from the interior and the exterior of her ceramic vessels, from the inside to the outside of the sites she explored in Florence, and within and distanced from our own global histories.

Jane Irish received her MFA from Queens College, CUNY, and has exhibited in New York and Philadelphia since 1983. Irish was included in the 2009 exhibition *Dirt on Delight*, which was organized by the Institute for Contemporary Art, PA and traveled to the Walker Art Center, MN. She has also had a solo exhibition at the Morris Gallery, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA and has been included in exhibits at the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, DE; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH; the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, UT; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; and the Baltimore Museum of Art, MD. Irish was a 2011 recipient of a Pew Fellowship, and she was a 2009 recipient of a Painters and Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation. Her work can be found in the permanent collections of institutions including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is Irish’s 5th solo exhibition at Locks Gallery.

Locks Gallery is located at 600 Washington Square South in Philadelphia, PA. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 6pm. For additional information, please contact Locks Gallery at 215-629-1000, fax 215-629-3868, or email info@locksgallery.com.

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