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Curatorial Programs



**MOLDING / MARK-MAKING:
CERAMIC ARTISTS AND THEIR DRAWINGS**

Ann Agee, Lynda Benglis, Kathy Butterly, Nicole Cherubini, Elisa D'Arrigo, Peter Gourfain, Joanne Greenbaum, Valerie Hegarty, Stephanie Imbeau, Kristen Jensen, Julia Kunin, Alice Mackler, Annabeth Rosen, Arlene Shechet, Peter Shire, and Betty Woodman

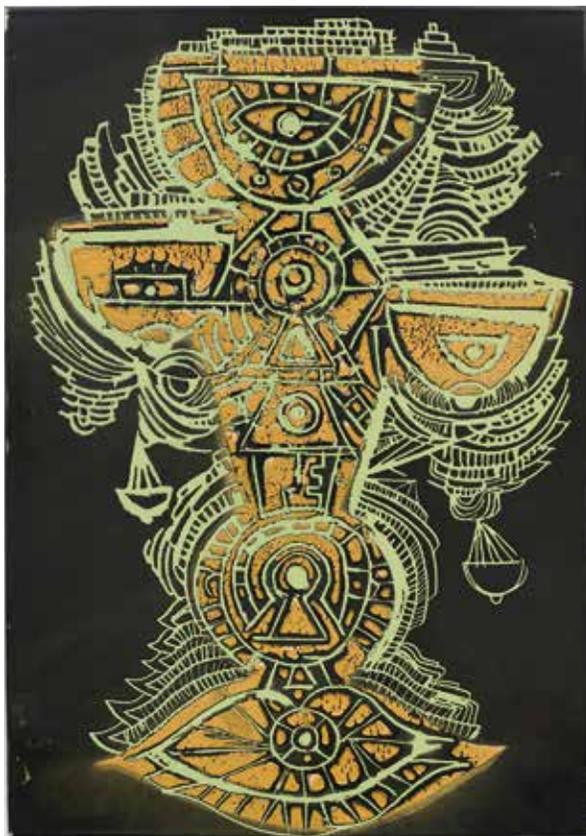
Curated by Margaret Mathews-Berenson and Allison Peller

January 21 – March 25, 2018

Opening reception: Sunday, January 21, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Although clay has been used as a modeling medium for thousands of years throughout the world, its appreciation as fine art rather than craft and its visibility in so many different forms today can, to a great extent, be traced to Peter Voulkos (1924-2002), who burst upon the California art scene in the mid-1950s with his signature large, free-form, improvisational ceramic works. Voulkos gave birth to the California Clay movement inspiring not only his students, Ken Price and Ron Nagle, but also such notable women artists as Viola Frey and **Betty Woodman**. Thanks to a proliferation of energetic and thoughtful contemporary practitioners, the barriers between craft and fine art are disappearing, moving the ceramic medium forward to new frontiers.

The current revival of interest in ceramics by artists, galleries, museums, collectors and audiences alike can be attributed to a confluence of factors: changing attitudes about the medium; a natural impulse to embrace the handmade in the wake of technological imperatives in art making; and the increasing number of contemporary artists who have turned to multi-disciplinary practices, blurring the lines between painting, sculpture, drawing, collage, photography, 3-D rendering, video and installation. This blending of mediums has led some artists with backgrounds in painting and sculpture to explore ceramics as an adjunct to their practices or even embrace it as their primary medium. Working with ceramics—from molding or casting to the application of glazes and multiple firings—are slow, meditative and deliberate processes. Shaping is done with the hands, leaving a record of gesture in the form itself. Ceramic artists also freely challenge traditional approaches by combining clay with other mediums, altering or creating glazes to suit their needs,



Julia Kunin *Untitled Figure on Black, 2017*

painting and drawing directly on surfaces, building large-scale, free-form pieces, and even creating room-sized installations.

Renewed museum interest in ceramics

Exhibition opportunities for ceramic artists are increasing as high-profile museums host solo shows for some of the leading ceramic artists. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Museum mounted a retrospective of Ken Price in 2013. Betty Woodman had a one-person show at the Metropolitan Museum in 2006, and another show ten years later at London's Institute of Contemporary Art. An exhibition at the Frick Collection in 2016-2017 featured **Arlene Shechet's** contemporary porcelain sculptures made during a series of residencies at the Meissen factory in Dresden in dialogue with one hundred masterworks produced at Meissen almost 250 years earlier. These high profile exhibitions mark the growing popularity of ceramics.

Process, materiality, and metaphorical connection to contemporary issues

For the artists in *Molding / Mark-Making*, the lure of the ceramic medium is more allied with the primacy of touch, intent, and innovation than with strict adherence to standard expectations or vessel forms. They also use clay's transmutable nature in a metaphoric way to explore conceptual themes and issues—politics, nature, the environment, climate change, the body, gender identity and more.

Peter Gourfain populates his clay vessel, *California Urn*, 1998, with a hand-carved frieze of wild ibex, caribou and zebras. Encircling the vessel, they graze peacefully, reminding us of their tenuous hold on their native lands. **Valerie Hegarty** is interested in decay and environmental exploitation. Having read graphic reports of genetically-altered fruit and vegetables, and seen photographs of exploding watermelons in China that literally outgrew their skins because of overdoses of growth hormones, she imagines a bowl of radiant peaches emanating toxic fumes and watermelons dissolving into puddles of dark oozing mush.

Working with glazes and clay requires dedication, patience



Valerie Hegarty *Bowl of Peaches with Holes, 2017*



Annabeth Rosen WERR, 2017

and physical engagement with materials. Because of its unpredictability, a ceramic work may be subject to change depending on its position in the kiln, the alchemical effects of the layering of glazes, temperature of firing and any number of other conditions. “With clay, you have to let go, and you have to expect failure,” **Julia Kunin** asserted in a recent interview. **Annabeth Rosen** pushes the limits of clay, firing and re-firing each piece numerous times while adding layer upon layer of glazed clay to the mass and finally using baling wire to contain it. The result is an organic mass with fissures, cracks and crevices much like rocky outcroppings formed by powerful geological forces. Likewise, her drawings are corporeal in their expressiveness. A similar physical intensity infuses **Kathy Butterly’s** modestly-scaled, quirky sculptures. Though they may resemble iconic cup-like objects, they slouch, droop, tilt and list like drunken sailors. Labor-intensive and obsessively worked, they often require up to twenty firings as well as layer upon layer of glazes. Her detailed drawing, *Portrait of I’m Not Sure I Trust Your Eggs*, 2012, is a subtle pencil study rendered in the tradition of an Old Master drawing, and an accurate visual record of the corresponding three-dimensional work that preceded the drawing. Because her work is rooted in day-to-day personal experiences, forms evolve and her stories change, depending on what is happening in her internal and external worlds—the music she is listening to, what she sees in the streets of New York or on her travels, what is happening in the world of politics—all have an impact on what she is working on. “It comes from living in the world,” she says emphatically. No doubt all of the artists in this exhibition would agree.



Annabeth Rosen BULGE, 2017

Acknowledging ceramics’s historical perspective

The artists in *Molding / Mark Making* acknowledge a deep awareness of the history of ceramics and its relationship to the history of art. Betty Woodman’s vessels reference a host of ancient cultures from Greece and Rome to China and Mexico. **Ann Agee’s** room-sized installations of blue and white tiles were inspired by 17th century Delftware. Her recent display series relates to the history and influence of advertising, consumerism and manufacturing. Valerie Hegarty’s lush watercolors are inspired by 19th century American still life subjects and marine paintings. While perfecting her iridescent luster glazes, Julia Kunin did extensive research on historic metallic glazes, finally locating a ceramics factory in Hungary where she could work with the proprietary glazes developed there over a century ago for use in Art Nouveau ceramics. **Nicole Cherubini’s** large vessels with handles give a nod to Hittite pots while the turquoise glazes suggest colors found in 13th century Persian tombs she saw in the Mevlana Museum in Turkey and **Peter Shire’s** jaunty, brightly-colored teapots are rendered in the



Ann Agee left to right: *Twin Vase (right)*, 2015; *Garniture Vase*, 2017; *Twin Vase (left)*, 2015



Nicole Cherubini *Baby Blue*, 2009

primary palette of the Memphis Group, Ettore Sottsass's Milan-based collective, which came to prominence in the 1980s.

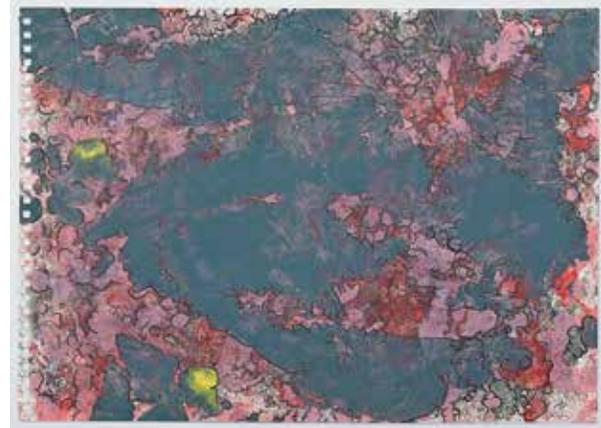
Ceramics's connection to drawing

It is not surprising that ceramic artists look to drawing as elemental to their creative practices. For the sixteen artists in this exhibition, drawing is key to the dialogue between mind and hand and connects with their work in clay—marks made on paper are analogous to the molding of clay and application of glazes. Some make preparatory drawings; others create drawings after a ceramic work is completed, while still others draw or carve directly on the clay to activate surfaces. Many of their drawings point towards process, gesture and intent that translate into three dimensions; some create three-dimensional drawings. Others use widely varied paper supports to explore ways to render gesture in three dimensions. While seeking more expressive ways of working in clay, artists depend on drawing to work out compositions with greater immediacy, often blurring the boundaries between the two mediums or melding them completely.

Arlene Shechet's paper pulp drawings are cast from molds made of firebricks used in building and repairing kilns, referencing the durational firing process of ceramics. She describes them as having a "reciprocal relation-



Joanne Greenbaum *Untitled*, 2016



Elisa D'Arrigo *Civitella drawing 2*, 2013

ship" with her ceramic practice. **Joanne Greenbaum** draws on porcelain in ink, gouache, casein and crayons, treating it "like paper" or a drawing in 3-D. Peter Gourfain's drawings of African-American subway riders provide him with models for his series of *Black Lives Matter* figurative ceramics. Nicole Cherubini refers to her drawings as "topographical maps for the sculpture."

"I draw continually," explains Annabeth Rosen, "often years ahead of the ideas I am actually building in clay because of the speed and quantity that I can achieve in the drawings." Her drawings are thought-gestures expressed in a brisk layering of energized brushstrokes whose vibrancy eventually emerges in her ceramic stacks. **Lynda Benglis** draws onto the irregular surfaces of her paper-pulp reliefs with the same fluid movement evident in her hand-built ceramics. Betty Woodman often sketches with a thin wash of wet clay on paper, merging the two mediums with each mark. Kathy Butterly draws over color photographs of her delicate porcelain pieces in quivering slashes of iridescent nail polish.



Peter Shire *Spun Orbit*, 2006

Nicole Cherubini embeds a framed drawing into the body of her ceramic piece, *Baby Blue*, 2009, physically joining both mediums together. In the drawing, abstract shapes resembling pottery shards suggest a deconstructed or exploded pot—a concretized fusion of the artist's dual practice.

A number of artists working in the ceramic medium also use their drawing practices to reference the physicality of clay and glazes. Peter Shire's coffee cup drawings appear to be rendered quickly as he explores the nature of a familiar domestic object that he will translate into slab-built clay pieces with his signature expressive glazes splashed and dripped onto the surfaces like Jackson Pollock paintings. For **Elisa D'Arrigo**, drawing is a way to investigate surface while creating abstract symphonies of watercolor in a manner similar to her glazes. **Stephanie Imbeau's** delicate luster glaze drawings on porcelain slabs allow her to navigate between drawing and ceramics.

The female form

The female figure makes multiple appearances here, perhaps because so many of the artists in the exhibition are women. **Alice Mackler's** lumpy but brilliantly glazed earthenware figures are, in fact, self-portraits; yet they can easily read as quintessential females emphatically declaring their individuality. **Kathy Butterly** refers to her quirky ceramic pieces as "3-D drawings" residing in an "edgy place between abstraction and figuration." *Like Butter*, 1997, evolved when she was deeply in love and trying to become pregnant. "I just followed the forms and followed my intuition, and this is what came out. It is a pure little piece, a little in-your-face, rude and naughty, sweet and funny." The female body also has a prominent place in the work of Julia Kunin. *Vasarely's Sphere*, 2015, features a sturdy Cubist-inspired, double-breasted, mechanistic form with eyes in the place of nipples and a staircase snaking through the gem-like sphere at her base, colliding with the flesh. Kunin uses saturated enamel glazes on metal supports as a means of making "drawings" that relate to her sculptures. Agitated black lines define the figures and extend beyond the edges, implying movement as if they are floating in space.



Stephanie Imbeau *Untitled (Résider, Luster Drawing 12)*, 2016



Kathy Butterly *Like Butter*, 1997

Although her work in clay does not allude to female attributes *per se*, Elisa D'Arrigo is interested in creating the sensation of aliveness with her twisting, hollow forms. Like open-mouthed snakes or disembodied intestines, they are stand-ins for a body in motion. The forms gesticulate and the orifices beckon us inside to the hidden mysteries of an internal world. Her drawings evolved while waiting

for clay to dry and pieces to be fired. Splattering paint onto plastic sheets, she then transfers the paint onto paper and dabs on more pigment in layers. The subtle, mottled, all-over surfaces resemble the glazing effects of her ceramic pieces. **Kristen Jensen's** witty yet ghostlike porcelain pots also exude a sensation of aliveness. The vase, *that wan smile*, 2012-14, and her related walnut ink *Vessel Studies*, 2013, suggest diminutive abstract Buddhas poised perhaps to reveal wise pronouncements. They are at once formally beautiful and inherently flawed. Irregularly formed, they are awkward, yet nearly perfect—their sensual sandblasted surfaces speak of the human touch as does the partial "smile" sliced into the clay as if rendered with two quick flicks of a sharp scimitar in some kind of ritual stroke.

Summary

Whether making marks in clay or on paper, the artists in this exhibition freely express their thoughts about life and art through their chosen mediums with a directness that is both physical and cerebral. Each mark is visible, making us witnesses to the creative processes where hand and mind work together in tandem. Each medium is in service of the other, inspiring cross-fertilization and reciprocity between sculptural forms in clay and works on paper. Experiencing drawings and ceramics side-by-side clarifies these relationships for the viewer while inspiring new readings and understandings of each work of art. ■

— Margaret Mathews-Berenson & Allison Peller, 2018

BIOGRAPHIES

Margaret Mathews-Berenson is an independent curator and art educator specializing in contemporary art and photography. Former director of the Drawing Society and editor of *Drawing* magazine, she is an accomplished lecturer and writer. Her articles have been published in *ARTS*, *American Artist*, *The Pastel Journal* and *Sculpture* magazine, among others. She is currently on the faculty of the 92nd Street Y in New York, and serves as curator of the Deborah Remington Charitable Trust for the Visual Arts.

Allison Peller is an independent curator based in Brooklyn, NY. She has curated exhibitions in New York and Minnesota, including *Ornamentation of the Joint*, Pfizer Building, Brooklyn, NY; *The (Sacred) Void*, First Things, NYC; and *Visual Inheritance*, Olson Gallery, St. Paul, MN. In addition, she has project managed numerous exhibitions, including *New. New York*, Essl Museum, Vienna, and *Incarnational Aesthetics*, NYCAMS Gallery, NYC.

CHECKLIST

ANN AGEÉ

EARRING STORE, 2017
Porcelain, stoneware, earthenware, brass,
cotton thread, silk, cotton
40 x 26 x ¼ inches
GUIDEBOOK (SWEDISH VERSION), 2015
Silkscreen ink on mulberry paper
11 ½ x 15 inches (open)
GARNITURE VASE, 2017
Porcelain
23 x 18 x 4 ½ inches
TWIN VASE (RIGHT), 2015
Porcelain
16 x 11 x 4 ¼ inches
TWIN VASE (LEFT), 2015
Porcelain
18 x 12 x 4 ½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, NY

LYNDA BENGLIS

CHITIMACHA, 2013
Glazed ceramic
18 ½ x 28 x 12 inches
WOOPEE, 2015
Handmade paper over chicken wire, ground
coal with matte medium, acrylic medium,
glitter
33 x 20 x 14 inches
Courtesy of Cheim & Read, NY

KATHY BUTTERLY

LIKE BUTTER, 1997
Clay and glaze
4 ½ x 3 ¾ x 3 ⅜ inches
SOLID STAND, 2016
Clay and glaze
5 7/8 x 6 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches
HYPNO, 2016
Nail polish collage
9 x 6 ⅞ inches
*PORTRAIT OF I'M NOT SURE I TRUST
YOUR EGGS*, 2010
Pencil on paper
15 x 10 ¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Tibor de Nagy
Gallery, NY
FROSTY, 1997
Clay and glaze
4 x 4 x 2 7/8 inches
Collection of Elizabeth H. Levine
I'M NOT SURE I TRUST YOUR EGGS, 2010
Clay and glaze
4 ½ x 3 ¾ x 3 ½ inches
Private collection
SOUND COUSIN, 2016
Nail polish collage
19 ½ x 14 ¾ inches
Private collection
NICOLE CHERUBINI
BABY BLUE, 2009
Terracotta, earthenware, porcelain, glaze,
enamel, wood, Digital C-print, graphite,
ink, flashe paint, Plexiglas
51 x 25 x 44 inches
SQUARE DRAWING 01, 2008
Watercolor paper, ink, graphite, enamel,
acrylic and gouache
14 x 14 inches
SQUARE DRAWING 02, 2008
Digital c-prints, gouache, wax crayon on
watercolor paper
14 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the artist

ELISA D'ARRIGO

MOOL, 2012
Glazed ceramic
7 ½ x 11 x 5 ½ inches
AROUND THE BEND 3, 2017
Glazed ceramic
8 x 9 x 8 inches
CIVITELLA DRAWING 2, 2013
Acrylic, ink, and watercolor on paper
10 x 13 ¾ inches
CIVITELLA DRAWING 4, 2013
Acrylic, ink, and watercolor on paper
10 x 13 ¾ inches
CIVITELLA DRAWING 6, 2013
Acrylic, ink, and watercolor on paper
8 x 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Harris
Gallery, NY

PETER GOURFAIN

SKETCHBOOK, NOON (DAUGHTER), 2016
India ink on paper
10 x 7 ½ inches
SKETCHBOOK, 2017
Graphite on paper
10 x 7 ½ inches
BLACK LIVES MATTER #10, 2017
Glazed high-fire clay
18 x 12 x 15 inches
CALIFORNIA URN, 1998
Earthenware
24 x 17 inches
Courtesy of the artist

JOANNE GREENBAUM

UNTITLED, 2014
Gouache on air-dry white stoneware
14 x 16 x 12 inches
UNTITLED, 2016
Ink on porcelain
12 x 11 x 10 inches
UNTITLED, 2016
Oil based Sharpie on white stoneware
11 x 11 ½ x 10 ½ inches
UNTITLED, 2015
Watercolor on paper
17 x 14 inches
UNTITLED, 2014
Watercolor, gouache and graphite on paper
20 x 16 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Uffner
Gallery, NY

VALERIE HEGARTY

CLIPPER SHIP SHELL, 2016
Glazed ceramics
11 x 14 x 8 inches
BOWL OF PEACHES WITH HOLES, 2017
Glazed ceramics
17 ½ x 18 x 1 ½ inches
GLOWING PEACHES IN BASKET 3, 2015
Watercolor on paper
9 x 12 inches
WATERMELON GOTHIC, 2015
Watercolor on paper
9 x 12 inches
CLIPPER SHIP SKELETON, 2015
Watercolor on paper
9 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Burning in
Water, NY

STEPHANIE IMBEAU

*UNTITLED (COVER/UNCOVER, RÉSIDER,
STACK)*, 2015
Porcelain
7 x 7 x 4 inches
*UNTITLED (COVER/UNCOVER, RÉSIDER
4)*, 2015
Porcelain
7 x 10 ½ x 10 ½ inches
*UNTITLED (RÉSIDER, LUSTER DRAWING
6)*, 2016
Gold and platinum luster on porcelain
9 ¾ x 8 ¾ inches
*UNTITLED (RÉSIDER, LUSTER DRAWING
12)*, 2016
Gold and platinum luster on porcelain
3 x 7 ¾ inches
*UNTITLED (RÉSIDER, LUSTER DRAWING
19)*, 2016
Gold and platinum luster on porcelain
4 x 3 ¾ inches
*UNTITLED (RÉSIDER, LUSTER DRAWING
11)*, 2016
Gold and platinum luster on porcelain
3 x 2 ¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist

KRISTEN JENSEN

that wan smile, 2013-14
Porcelain with rutile wash
12 x 8 x 8 inches
VESSEL STUDIES 2, 2013
Walnut ink on handmade paper
12 x 9 inches
VESSEL STUDIES 4, 2013
Walnut ink on handmade paper
14 x 10 inches
Courtesy of the artist
ROUGH MAGIC, 2014
Sandblasted porcelain with soda ash wash
13 x 10 x 7 inches
Private collection

JULIA KUNIN

CHAMBERED RAINBOW, 2016
Ceramic
18 x 12 x 3 ½ inches
VASARELY'S SPHERE, 2015
Ceramic
22 x 12 x 10 inches
UNTITLED FIGURE ON GREEN, 2017
Enamel on steel
23 ½ x 16 ½ inches
UNTITLED FIGURE ON BLACK, 2017
Enamel on steel
23 ½ x 16 ½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

ALICE MACKLER

UNTITLED, 2016
Glaze, clay
8 ½ x 4 x 3 inches
UNTITLED, 2016
Glaze, clay
8 ¼ x 4 x 5 inches
UNTITLED, 2015
Acrylic and ink on paper
12 x 9 inches
UNTITLED, 2015
Acrylic and ink on paper
12 x 9 inches

UNTITLED, 2015
Acrylic and ink on paper
12 x 9 inches
UNTITLED, 2015
Acrylic and ink on paper
12 x 9 inches
Courtesy the artist and Kerry Schuss, NY

ANNABETH ROSEN

WERR, 2017
Fired ceramic with wire
15 x 11 x 10 inches
BULGE, 2017
Gouache on paper
14 x 17 inches
Courtesy the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, NY

ARLENE SHECHET

GONE A, 2013
Glazed ceramic, glazed kiln shelf, steel base
Overall: 59 ¼ x 20 ½ x 20 ½ inches
Ceramic: 22 ½ x 14 x 14 inches
GLINT, 2012
Cast pigmented cotton
40 x 30 inches (approximately)
Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins
& Co., NY

PETER SHIRE

SPUN ORBIT, 2006
Cone 06 clay and underglazes, with stain-
less steel detail
26 ½ x 12 ¾ x 7 ¼ inches
MOLECULAR TUTU, 2004
Cone 06 clay and underglazes, with stain-
less steel detail
31 x 14 ¼ x 8 ¾ inches
SCHIZZO, 2014
Cone 06 clay and underglazes
9 x 20 ¾ x 13 inches
ZENOBIA (COLOSSAL), 2017
Gouache on Arches paper
11 ¼ x 7 ½ inches
PHEWWWWW, 2016
Ink on Arches paper
9 ½ x 6 inches
THE PAST 50 YEARS, 2016
Ink on Arches paper
9 ½ x 6 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller
Gallery, NY

BETTY WOODMAN

WINDOW VASE #1 AND CARPET, 2012
Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer,
paint, and canvas
40 ½ x 84 ½ x 35 inches
FRENCH WINDOW, 2015
Glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer,
acrylic paint, canvas, and wood
74 x 43 x 10 inches
MARCH 10, #1, 2015
India ink, acrylic paint on sketch paper
17 x 14 ¾ inches
MARCH 10, #5, 2015
India ink, acrylic paint on sketch paper
13 ½ x 19 ¼ inches
NOVEMBER 5, #1, 2015
India ink, acrylic paint on sketch paper
16 ½ x 14 ¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, NY

Cover: **Betty Woodman**, *French Window*, 2015

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