



Art Macao 2019, Macao Museum of Art photo - paul leathers

PAUL LEATHERS

ALL THAT'S GOLD DOES GLITTER

An Exhibition of
Glamorous Ceramics

The global ceramics trade has had a long history in China's Pearl River Delta with Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Macao providing the bases of operation for a flourishing Maritime Silk Road. So, it was with eager anticipation that I headed to Macao this past June to attend the opening of All That's Gold Does Glitter: An Exhibition of Glamorous Ceramics. Installed in four integrated resorts, including The Venetian Macao, The Parisian Macao, Sands Macao and Four Seasons Hotel Macao, as well as at the Macao Museum of Art, the exhibition is on view from June 8th to October 9th of this year.

Coordinated for the Art Macao: International Art Exhibition and featuring 'Gold' as its theme, this invitational group exhibition showcases over ninety pieces created by twenty-seven contemporary ceramic artists from thirteen countries and regions, and is a featured part of Art Macao 2019, a six-month-long international arts and culture mega event (www.artmacao.mo/2019/en/) organized under the patronage of the Government of the Macao Special Admin-



Exhibition Opening, V.I.P. reception *photo credit: paul leathers*

Administrative Region (S.A.R.) to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its establishment.

The exhibition draws on the combined experience and expertise of China-based independent curator and ceramic artist, Caroline CHENG and the team at the award-winning The Venetian Macao under the leadership of Sands China Ltd. President, Dr. Wilfred Wong. In his preface to the exhibition catalogue, Dr. Wong states, "Besides providing the exhibition venues, resorts and hotels can also make use of their international networks when promoting art." "We are hoping," Dr. Wong continues, "to drive art development in Macao comprehensively through these initiatives." A well-attended opening ceremony took place in the grand lobby of The Venetian Macao, followed by VIP admission to the exhibition, and later that evening, a celebratory banquet dinner. Each event was set up in a manner conducive to facilitating communication between the organizers, their guests, and the foreign participants.

Artists invited to participate included (alphabetically); Greg Daly, Vipoo Srivilasa, and Prue Venables (Australia), Eliza Au, and Trudy Golley (Canada), Vinod Kumar Daroz (India), Antonella Cimatti, and Paolo Polloniato (Italy), Tetsuya Ishiyama, En Iwamura, and Makoto Komatsu (Japan), Konstantin Bessmertny (Macao), Ljubica Jovic Knezevic (Serbia), FANG Po Ching, and WANG Shin Yu (Taiwan), Michael Flynn (UK), Daniel Bare, Toby Buonagurio, Garth Johnson, Ryan Matthew Mitchell, John Neely, Peter Pincus, Hirosune Tashima, Jason Walker, and Suzanne Wolfe (USA).

Caroline CHENG - **Prosperity**; porcelain, gold lustre, fabric on metal stand. 2019. H 1.8 x W 1.8 m *photo credit: paul leathers*





En Iwamura - **Golden Wisdom - Not Seeing**; stoneware, gold lustre. 2019. H 50 x W 36 x D 22 cm. *photo credit: Sands China Ltd.*

Chinese artists included (alphabetically, with family name capitalized); CHENG Yi, and WU Hao Yu (China).

A focal point of the exhibition is CHENG's 1.8 x 1.8m artwork, Prosperity. Styled in the manner of a traditional Han Dynasty dress, its fabric is adorned with thousands of gold-lusted porcelain butterflies. Prominently displayed in The Venetian Macao's Baroque-styled lobby, the artwork anticipates the glamorous pieces to follow.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines glamorous as meaning "excitingly attractive," and the ceramic artworks on display certainly meet that bar. I was delighted to see that the exhibition, displayed in gilded vitrines and illuminated with high-wattage light projectors, was able to subvert the hierarchy of materials, where gold screams for attention, and ground the Colonnade's extravagant architectural space. In fact, both the space and the exhibition seem very well suited to each other.

Like moths to a flame, the objects draw in the passersby for a closer look. The exhibition website (<https://en.sandsresortsmacao.com/artmacao.html>) and mobile app created by the resort features an audio guide in three languages. Scanning a QR code at each exhibit leads one to the artist's page which provides a voiceover introduction of the artist's biography and the creative concept behind the artworks. With an estimated 100,000 visitors per day travelling through The Venetian Macao, the organizers estimate that 12 million visitors will view the exhibition over the next four months!

While the artworks in the exhibition are strong and highly diversified, there are a few standouts for me. Macau-based artist, Konstantin Bessmertny's pieces from his Magnum Opus series reference alchemical symbolism and, in his



Konstantin Bessmertny - **How To Make Gold At Home**; porcelain, overglaze, gold lustre. 2019. H 43 x W 32 cm *photo - Sands China Ltd.*



Garth Johnson - **Factory**; porcelain, overglaze decals, gold lustre. 2019. H 21 x W 15 x D 5cm. *photo credit: Sands China Ltd.*



Peonies; porcelain, gold lustre. 2019. H 26 x W 20 x D 11cm. *photo credit: andrew barcham*

words, the “spiritual complexities of the Universe in which everything around us is organized in sublime order.” A Russian-born graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts in Vladivostok, his consummate painting skills are, as with *How to Make Gold at Home*, applied to the decoration of ceramic forms reminiscent of an Ancient Greek krater.

The juxtaposition of a somewhat recognizable historical past with a contemporary context was evident in the works exhibited by Garth Johnson. While perhaps more historicism than historical, *Factory* melded Regency-like forms with tradition-

al Eastern motifs and the current reality of manufactured plastic containers.

Other captivating objects included; John Neely’s teapot with its hidden gold surprise reserved for the tea master, Daniel Bare’s sculptural assemblage with its understated use of gold lustre to tie the composition together, Prue Venables’ formal arrangement of supremely elegant gold-leafed porcelain forms, FANG Po Ching’s set of gold-lustred porcelain cups offered to the viewer on a rock-like base that reminds one of the ritualized presentation of an antique Chinese gongshi or scholar’s rock.

As Dr. Wong writes in the catalogue, “... we also hope to enable exhibition visitors to get a deeper knowledge of [...] contemporary ceramic art.”

My impression is that Dr. Wong, his team at The Venetian Macao and Caroline CHENG have done an admirable job of meeting, and even exceeding, that goal.

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Daniel Bare - **Squeeze Gold** (Dripping Chroma); found post-consumer ceramic objects, porcelain, glaze, sand, gold lustre. 2019. H 23 x W 38.5 x D 30.5 cm. *photo - Sands China Ltd*



Prue Venables - **Gold Oval Jug, White Spoon with Gold, and Oval Black Dish** porcelain, gold leaf. 2019. D *photo credit: Sands China Ltd.*

