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In collaboration with
Galerie Arcanes, Paris

jean
girel



JEAN GIREL: CERAMICS

Jean Girel—ceramist, poet, technician, dreamer—credits such disparate influences as the rich soil of his native hills, the metallic sheen of oil slicks, and the extraordinary ceramics of the Song Dynasty. The latter, made in China between 960 and 1279, are revered for their elegant simplicity of form and the complicated and varied technologies required to produce their lush glazes. This powerful alchemy of earth, water and fire inspired Girel's quest to uncover the mysteries of the universe through his own work in ceramics.

—
"It all begins in the celestial studio, where the planets and the elements are endlessly transforming, adapting, crystallizing or returning to their liquid state."
—

Born in Savoie in 1947, Girel apprenticed with a traditional potter at age 14, then studied at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Mâcon, earned a degree in visual arts in Paris and became a painter. By 1975, however, he was devoting himself exclusively to ceramics. With characteristic intensity, Girel began the unorthodox practice of making his own porcelain paste and experimenting with natural materials to create unique glazes. He spent decades developing original recipes, protocols and tools—including designing and building seventeen of his own kilns—and in the process became a master in his field, published author and sought-after authority. For his wealth of knowledge and passion for sharing it with others—Girel was named *Maitre d'Art* in 2000 by the French Minister of Culture, one of just two ceramists ever to receive this honor; later he was also made *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*. In 2004, Girel and his wife, fellow ceramist Valérie Hermans, were invited to the National Palace Museum of Taipei in Taiwan, renowned for its prestigious collection of Chinese antiquities. Girel was recognized as a national living treasure and, in an unprecedented honor for a contemporary artist, the museum opened its own Jean Girel gallery, acquiring eleven of his pieces to showcase there.

—
"I move forward one step at a time, through trial and error, by following my intuition, but never through cold calculation or simple reasoning."
—

The great diversity and originality of Girel's work is the result of his wholly unique approach. His techniques are not found in any ceramics textbook,

but in the laboratory of his mind. His materials are not procured from the usual suppliers; the clay and minerals come from the hills around his home and are excavated in his travels. His art is of the earth, quite literally. He observes natural phenomena and attempts to replicate in his kiln the “secret metamorphoses of the planet.” And he succeeds in the way that all great artists do: by illuminating the unknown and making the familiar newly compelling.

Were it not for the tiny animals like little clues perched on the lids of the pieces in his *Bestiaire* series, the delicate patterns might seem merely to be beautiful yet random designs, instead of the marvelously accurate and intricately textured renderings of reptile skins and mottled pelts. In recreating the skins of creatures as diverse as leopards and hippopotami, Girel systematically explores new firing techniques, opening the kiln door at random to introduce drops of water or a gust of air.

—
“Ceramics incorporate the four elements—earth, water, air, fire—and replicate the three kingdoms—animal, vegetable and mineral—using the process of firing to collapse time and recreate in a night what nature itself takes thousands of years to develop.”
—

Bird feathers, especially those of the peacock, a traditional decorative motif, helped Girel understand light and its relationship to the structure of matter. This led to the *Oiseaux* series and new firing techniques that illuminated an avian universe of iridescent rainbows and shimmering oil slicks. In pursuit of the iridescence he had seen on Song pieces and in pictures of *yohen temmoku* bowls from Japan, Girel experimented further with firing and cooling processes, as well as with the use of iron and powdered rock to achieve the murky brilliance and lava-like flows of the *Métallescences* series.

—
“The infinitely large becomes evident only in the presence of the infinitely small.”
—

The poetry of the northern Renaissance landscapes of Joachim Patinir sent Girel in pursuit of a new strategy, determined to find the third dimension in glazing. For his *Paysages* series, he caused “little accidents” in the glaze, breaches to allow the mineral layers to creep in, creating the striations so evocative of earth and sky. The work is pure abstraction; its vitrified incarnation anticipated but never certain until the moment it emerges from the kiln.



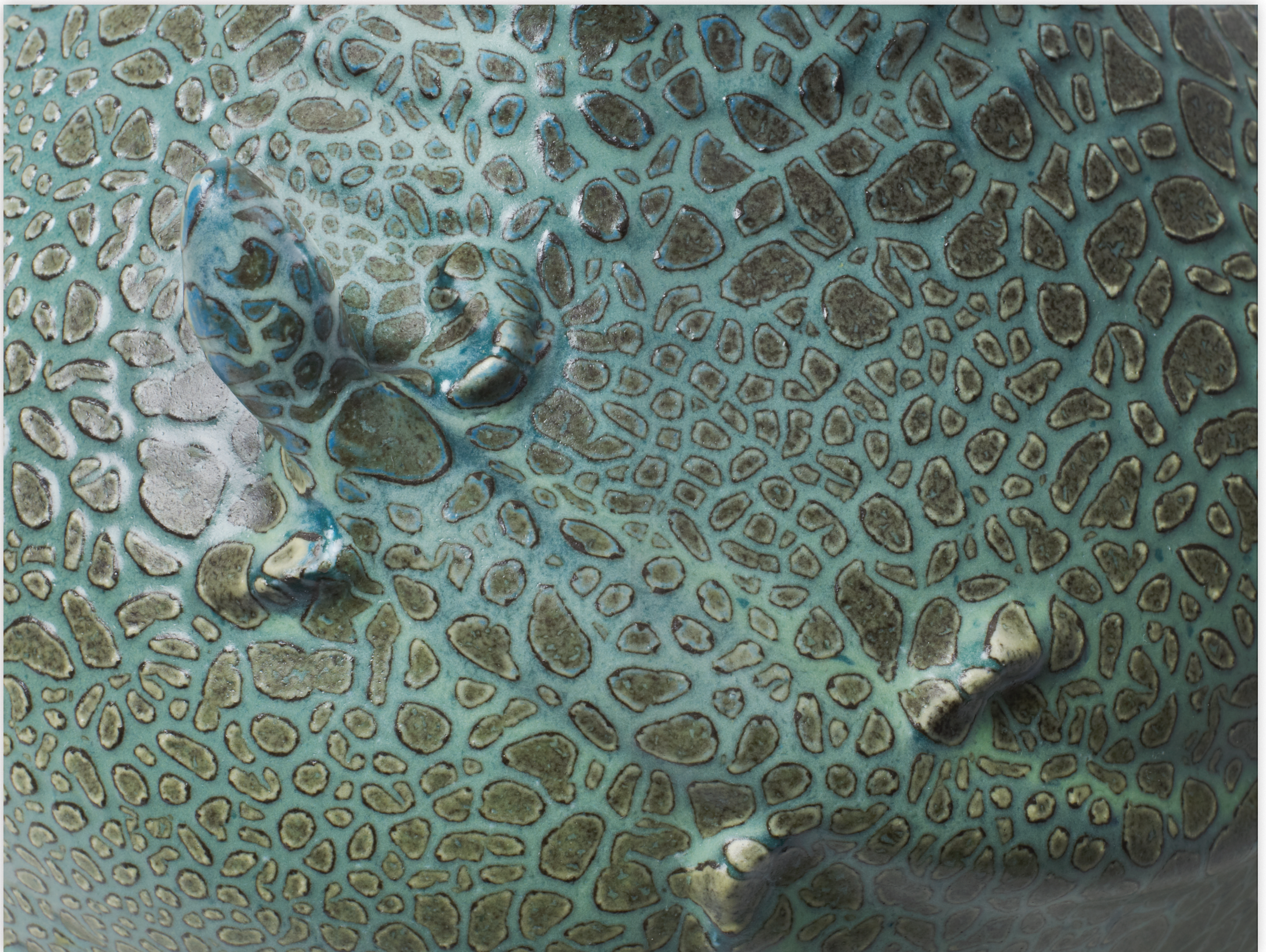
—
“The greatest suspense, and of course the greatest happiness, remains the opening of the kiln. When I have finally succeeded, prevailed after a long search, it is at once extremely satisfying and frustrating because there is the idea of ‘an ending’. This is when one looks forward to the next goal, to the excitement and passion of the search. All this is without end, each day my desire is renewed to combine earth, rock and fire.”
—





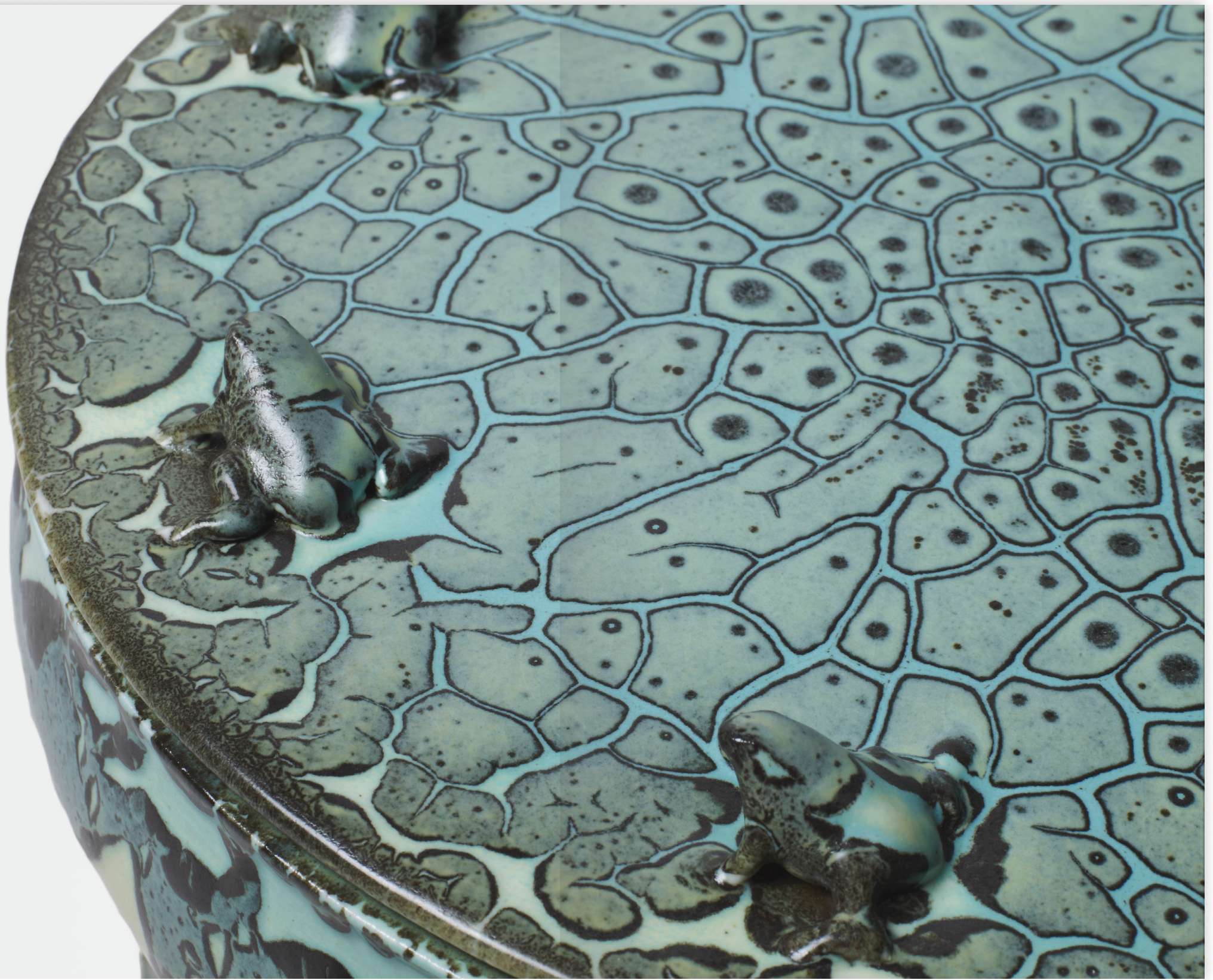


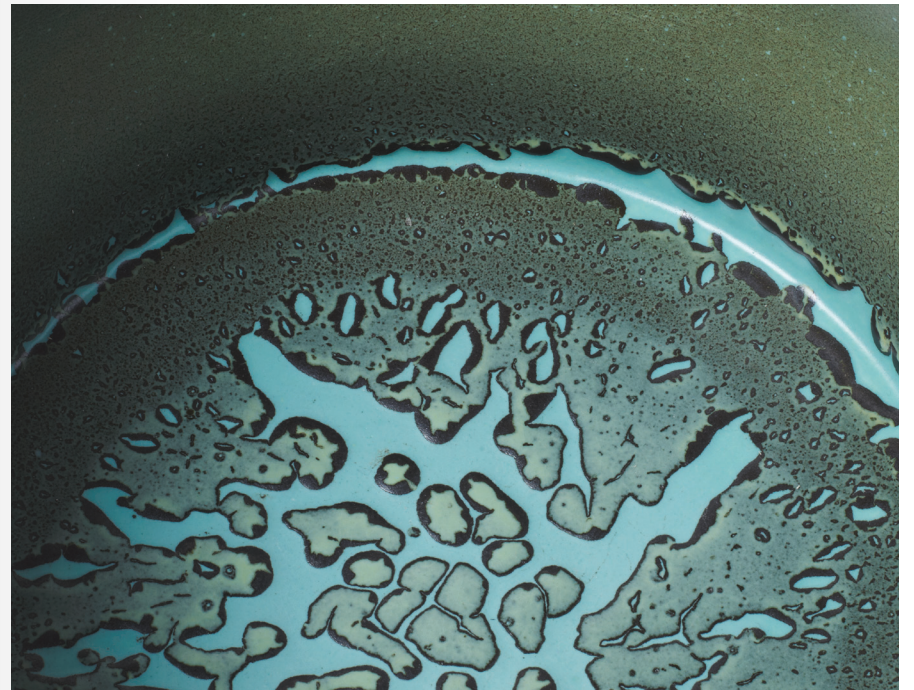
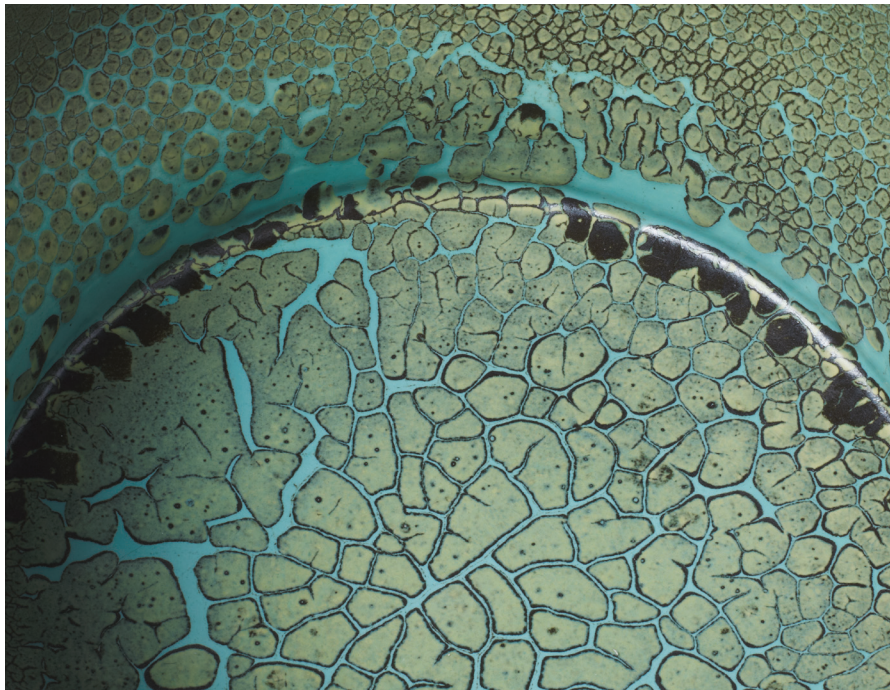




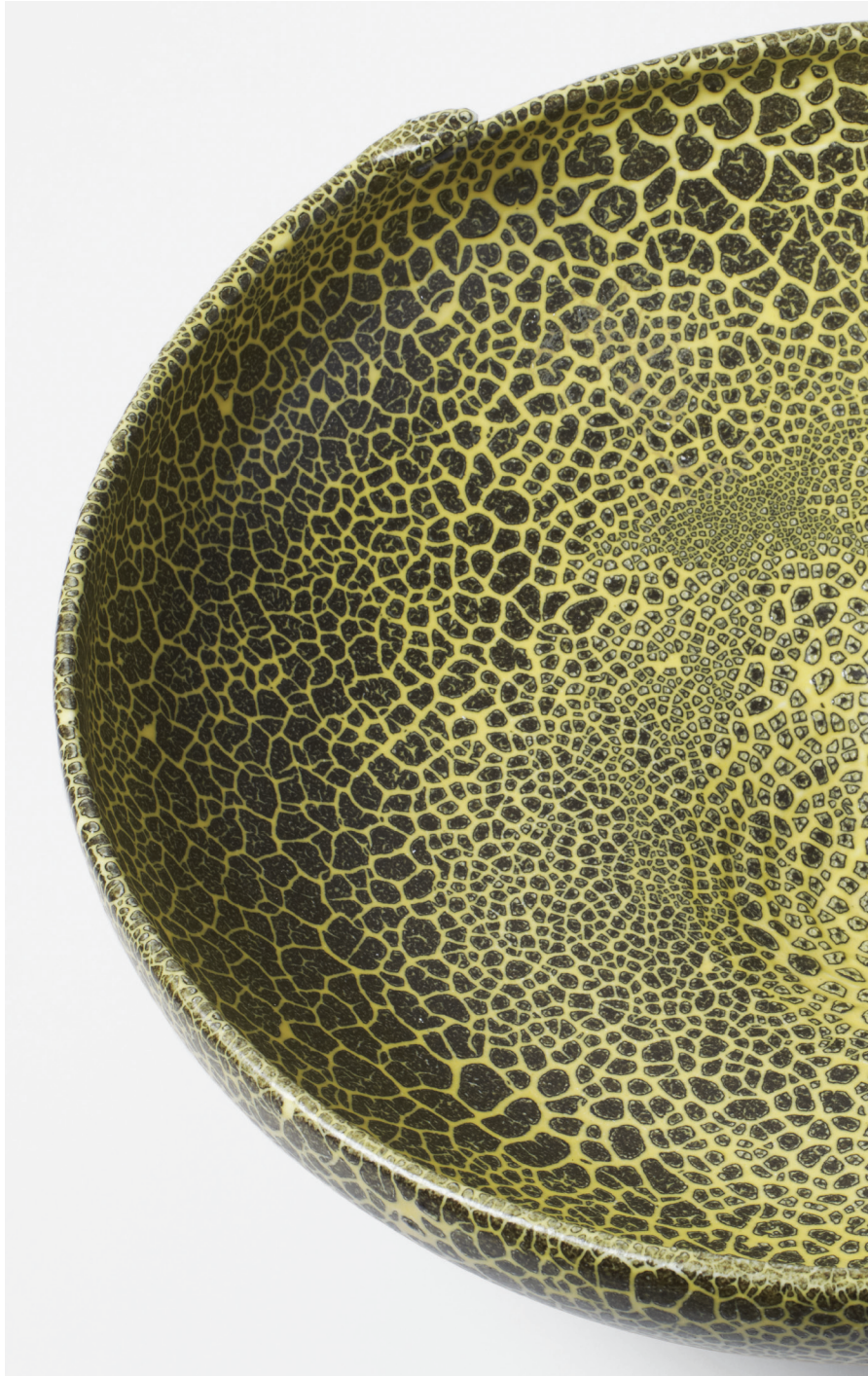






























SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 *Coquilles, mousses et lichens*, Galerie Arcanes, Paris, France
- 2010 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Pierre-Marie Giraud, Brussels, Belgium
- 2007 *Le jour et la nuit*, Maison de la céramique Saint Uze, Drôme, France
Jean Girel Valérie Hermans, porcelaines, Pavillon des arts et du design, Paris.
Galerie Arcanes, France
- 2006 *La nature de Jean Girel en petits formats*, Galerie Arcanes, Paris, France
Nature de la céramique, céramique de la nature, Musée Roybet-Fould,
Courbevoie, France
- 2005 *Nature de la céramique, céramique de la nature*, Musée de Sarreguemines, France
- 2004 *Du bronze au jade*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Terres d'Asie, Château des Bouillants, Dammarie-les-Lys, France
Retour de Taïwan, Galerie Arcanes, Paris, France
- 2002 *Le maître et l'élève*, Musée de Romanèche-Thorins, Saône-et-Loire, France
- 2001 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Tony Rocfort, Rennes, France
- 1999 *Jean Girel*, Galerie 13, Rennes, France
Retour en Orient, Galerie Terra Viva, Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, France
- 1995 *Jean Girel*, Château de Vascoeuil, France
Jean Girel, Galerie Terra Viva, St Quentin-la-Poterie, France
- 1994 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Demeter, Chambéry, France
Jean Girel, Musée Faure, Aix les Bains, France
Jean Girel, Galerie Epona, Paris, France
- 1993 *Jean Girel*, Galerie le Vieux Bourg, Denges, Switzerland
- 1992 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Epona, Paris, France
- 1990 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Epona, Paris, France
- 1989 *Les noirs des Song, le regard d'un connaisseur*, Collections Baur,
Geneva, Switzerland
- 1985 *Jean Girel*, Musée d'Art moderne du Nord, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France
- 1984 *Jean Girel*, Musée savoisien, Chambéry, France
Jean Girel, Galerie La Main, Brussels, Belgium
- 1983 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Sarver, Paris, France
- 1981 *Jean Girel*, Galerie Sarver, Paris, France
- 1980 *Jean Girel*, Galerie La Main, Brussels, Belgium

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Musée national de la Céramique, Sèvres, France
- Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, France
- Musée d'Art moderne du Nord, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France
- Musée Déchelette, Roanne, France
- Musée des Ursulines, Mâcon, France
- Musée savoisien, Chambéry, France
- Musée Faure, Aix-les-Bains, France
- Musée de Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, France
- Musée du Cinquantenaire, Brussels, Belgium
- Ministère des Affaires culturelles, Belgium
- FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, France
- Fondation Baur, Geneva, Switzerland
- Musée Palissy, Lacapelle-Biron, France
- National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
- Ganjin Celadon Museum, Ganjin, Korea

HONORS

- Lauréat du Salon des Ateliers d'Art, Paris, 1979
- Médaille d'or de la Biennale de Vallauris, 1980
- Grand Prix départemental des Métiers d'Art, 1980
- Mention spéciale, Grand Prix Palissy, 1991
- Maître d'Art, promotion 2000
- Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, 2008

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WRITINGS ON CERAMICS BY JEAN GIREL

- Fouurrure de lièvre : à propos d'un bol des collections Baur*, bulletin n° 47
de la Fondation Baur, Geneva, 1988.
- Sèvres : la Manufacture explorée par un céramiste*, edited by la Manufacture
nationale de Sèvres, 2000.
- Alain Girel, ou le paradis retrouvé*, March 2002.
- La sagesse du potier*, Éditions de l'Œil neuf, April 2004.

UPCOMING PUBLICATION :

- Brève histoire de la céramique*, Éditions de l'œil neuf, 2012

COLLABORATIONS :

- Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat*, Arnoldsche, Stuttgart, 1998.
- Les faïences de Slavik et Claude Palley*, Editions AACSP, March 2008

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BOÎTE À L'ÉLÉPHANT

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 8 ½"
DIAMETER: 7 ¾"

GIR 52



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BOÎTE À L'ÉLÉPHANT

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 8 ½"
DIAMETER: 7 ¾"

GIR 51



PP.08-09

BOÎTE AUX HIPPOPOTAMES

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 6 ½"
DIAMETER: 8 ½"

GIR 49



P.09

BOÎTE AUX HIPPOPOTAMES

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 6 ½"
DIAMETER: 8 ½"

GIR 50



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BOÎTE À L'OISEAU

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 12 ½"
DIAMETER: 8 ¼"

GIR 53



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BOÎTE À L'OISEAU

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 12 ½"
DIAMETER: 8 ½"

GIR 54



P.11

BOÎTE À L'OISEAU

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 12 ½"
DIAMETER: 8 ¼"

GIR 55



PP.12-13

COUPE AUX OISEAUX

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 6"
DIAMETER: 16 ¼"

GIR 61



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Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated
HEIGHT: 8"
DIAMETER: 6 ½"
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BOÎTE AUX TROIS PAONS

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Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 13 ¼"
DIAMETER: 7 ½"

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COUPE SUR COLONNADES

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 6 ¾"
DIAMETER: 14 ½"

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GRAND SEAU AU PAYSAGE

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 8 ½"
DIAMETER: 9 ½"

GIR 68

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GRAND DISQUE "BI"

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

DIAMETER: 16"

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BOÎTE AU CHAT

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 7 ¾"
DIAMETER: 5 ¾"

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CHAUDRON SUR PIEDS

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 3"
DIAMETER: 13 ¾"

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GRAND SEAU AU PAYSAGE

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 7 ¾"
DIAMETER: 9 ½"

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GRAND SEAU AU PAYSAGE

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France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 7"
DIAMETER: 9 ½"

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COUPE SUR COLONNADES

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France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 8 ¾"
DIAMETER: 15 ½"

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CHAUDRON SUR PIEDS

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 3 ¾"
DIAMETER: 13"

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GRAND DISQUE "BI"

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

DIAMETER: 14 ¾"

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GRAND DISQUE "BI"

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

DIAMETER: 15 ¾"

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BOÎTE AU CHAT

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 8"
DIAMETER: 5"

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BOÎTE AU CHIEN

Porcelain
France, 2012
Signed and dated

HEIGHT: 7 ¼"
DIAMETER: 5"

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