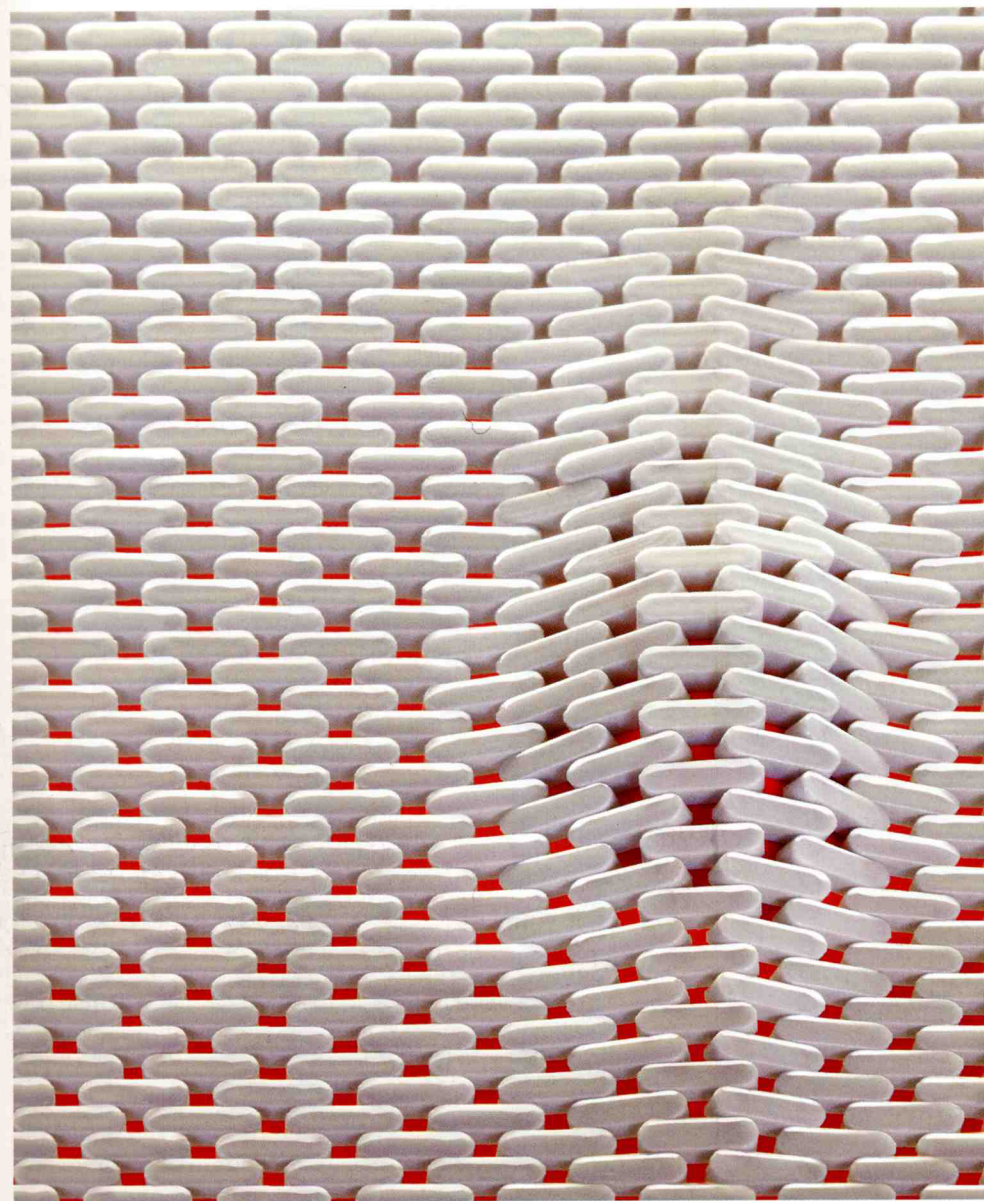


Christelle Familiari Weaving Tic Tacs




With her petite frame, freckles and glasses, Christelle Familiari doesn't look like the type who would dress in a hand-crocheted red cape and ski mask, then invite strangers to give her hick-eyes. But the themes of desire and seduction have long appealed to this surprising 35-year-old artist. Recently she's abandoned performance art and turned to exploring materials and repetitive gestures, such as weaving a 3,000-square-foot carpet out of metal wire, a project that took nearly three years. Intrigued by her work, Nestor Perkal invited her to CRAFT to try her hand at weaving porcelain.

At the atelier, she tried out several different shapes for the beads that would be strung on wires, then woven together. She finally settled on little white nuggets that resemble flattened tic tacs. Ten thousand were produced. Then she sat down with the technicians and threaded them all day, every day, for more than a week. She shows a sample of the woven "fabric," sliding the tic tacs together and apart. "People think of ceramic as a cold material, but I find it sensual," says Familiari. "It's smooth, and you can move it. At the same time, there's a preciousness to it."

When she exhibits "Tissu en porcelaine" (2007), she drapes it over a transparent table with a small orange lump of porcelain tucked underneath to illustrate "the fabric's ability to adapt to any form." Here again she reveals her fascination with seduction, "hiding something so it's more noticeable." Oddly, this unidentifiable bump completely changes the nature of the piece, transforming it from a technical exercise—a ceramic tablecloth—into a work of art.

work of artist Christine Borland, who told Perkal she wanted to make a ceramic skeleton that looked as if it had been submerged in seawater for years. Entitled "Conservatory," the work went through many stages before achieving its ultimate form: porcelain bone fragments engraved with algae-like scars. Borland made another skeleton—this one intact and unscarred—and put it in a lobster trap that is now in the waters off the Isle of Bute. She says that she plans to fish it out several years from now.

All of which calls to mind Nestor Perkal's desire to take porcelain beyond the plate. It's hard to imagine a more distant place than the bottom of the Atlantic. 

CRAFT, Impasse Becquerel, 87000F, Limoges. Tel. 33/5-55-49-17-17; craft-limoges.org.

looking for an industrial partner for other designs including Lacaton and Vassal's ingenious steel beam sheathed in porcelain and decorated with an ivy motif. Ceramic is a great fire retardant, making the beams as practical as they are decorative.

Porcelain's resistance to temperature extremes is also demonstrated by Javier Perez's fountain head. In 1996, when the Spanish artist was preparing his first solo exhibit in

Paris, he contacted CRAFT, which used a cast of the artist's own head to make a white porcelain sculpture pierced with 800 holes to spray water in every direction. Two of the fountains now sit face-to-face in the garden of the national ceramics museum in Limoges, where they have braved the elements for the past three years.

And somewhere off the coast of Scotland, a porcelain skeleton is braving the sea. It's the

THE CERAMIC EXPERIENCE Editions Bernard Chauveau has just published this comprehensive history of CRAFT illustrated with 220 full-color photos. In French with English translation, the text includes interviews with four creators. A limited edition of 200 copies comes with four porcelain plates decorated and signed by Pierre Charpin. It will be available in several U.S. locations including the Rizzoli Bookstore and the Cooper-Hewitt museum in Manhattan. bernardchauveau-editeur.com

