



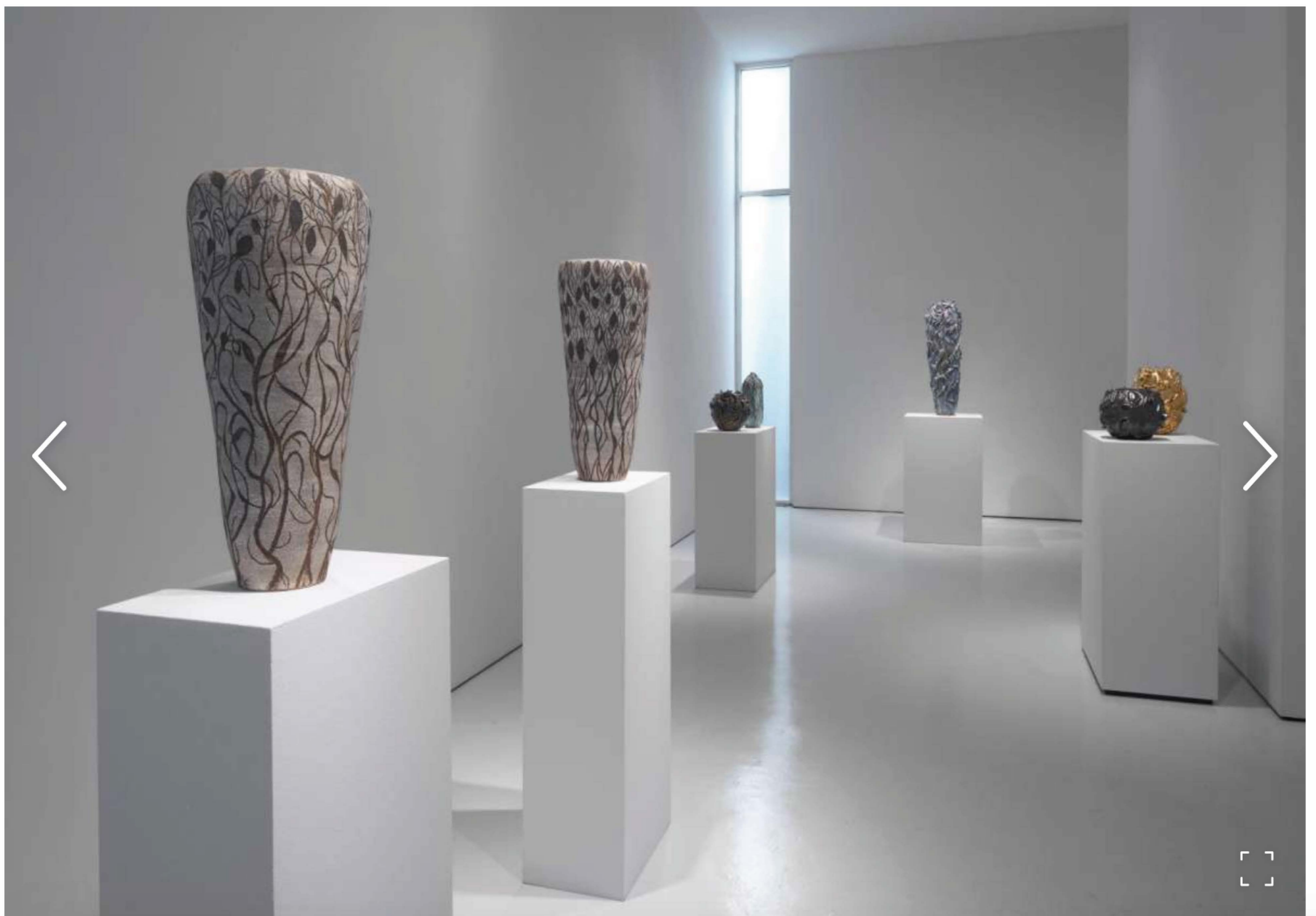
Art review: Ceramics and abstracts with Fiona Waterstreet and Dorothy Hood at McClain Gallery



Molly Glentzer

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Ceramics by Fiona Waterstreet are on view through Dec. 21 at McClain Gallery.

Photo: Courtesy of the artist / McClain Gallery

Fiona Waterstreet's spiny "Black and White Bowl" could have been inspired by a seed pod — perhaps a sweet gum ball or one of the globes left by a datura blossom.

The bowl piqued my interest because it is a seductively menacing outlier within Waterstreet's first show at McClain Gallery. The piece looks both invitingly tactile and dangerous to handle.

The artist also has hollowed out loopy totems that are glazed black, but most of the works on display are classical vase forms, off-kilter vessels and bulbous, whimsical bird sculptures in lighter tones that seem genuinely good-humored.

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Along with sculpting clay, Waterstreet works with porcelain, combining hand-built and wheel techniques as she explores sgraffito and organic slip designs. A few pieces are embellished with the sparkle of gold Lustre.

Waterstreet, who is British, began making ceramics just 10 years ago. Since she is married to a famous artist, it must have taken some gumption to begin sharing her work.

Fans of John Alexander will recognize some affinities they share: The bird heads poking out from some of her sculptures resemble ironic figures in his paintings and prints. Vines that wind lyrically up and around Waterstreet's vessels also may be in dialogue with her husband's dense landscapes and botanicals.

An impressive contingent of Houston art community luminaries and friends of the couple turned out for the opening and a festive dinner afterward, hosted by the gallery.

Before everyone decamped to the restaurant, I visited McClain's adjacent larger gallery for a belated look at "Illuminated Earth," a show of dramatic, abstract paintings by the late [Dorothy Hood](#). I had that space pretty much to myself.

After the earthy and fun experience of Waterstreet's ceramics, Hood's canvases felt like a lonely flying dream. Her canvases loomed in silence, looking epic and lush with her trademark decalomania and washes, often rendered with unsettling and mysterious color combinations.

Inspired by images of earth as seen from the sky, Hood was confident and unwavering in her vision but struggled during her lifetime to achieve the recognition she felt she deserved. The brochure for the show acknowledges her comment, "I am painting for a time I will never see."

The Hood show opening, a month before Waterstreet's, probably drew a crowd, too. But on my way back through the gallery's rooms, I couldn't help reading one more thing into "Black and White Bowl": Fame can be a prickly business.

“Fiona Waterstreet: New Ceramics” and “Dorothy Hood: Illuminated Earth” are both on view through Dec. 21 at McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond; 713-520-9988, mcclaingallery.com.

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Molly Glentzer

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Molly Glentzer, a staff arts critic since 1998, writes mostly about dance and visual arts but can go anywhere a good story leads. Through covering public art in parks, she developed a beat focused on Houston's emergence as one of the nation's leading "green renaissance" cities.

During about 30 years as a journalist Molly has also written for periodicals, including Texas Monthly, Saveur, Food & Wine, Dance Magazine and Dance International. She collaborated with her husband, photographer Don Glentzer, to create "Pink Ladies & Crimson Gents: Portraits and Legends of 50 Roses" (2008, Clarkson Potter), a book about the human culture behind rose horticulture. This explains the occasional gardening story byline and her broken fingernails.

A Texas native, Molly grew up in Houston and has lived not too far away in the bucolic town of Brenham since 2012.