

Morgane Salmon

C'est comme ça

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Entretiens de l'artiste
avec **Jean Jérôme**



L'Atelier contemporain

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Des spectres chromatiques :

une conversation

Au début de l'année 2022, par un beau matin froid et ensoleillé, le monde de Morgane Salmon reçut la visite de trois surprenants avatars. Ils arrivèrent ensemble, sans crier gare, poussèrent la porte promptement, résolument, comme s'ils avaient déjà une claire intuition des lieux et de ce qu'ils allaient y découvrir. Chacun semblait mû par une irrépressible curiosité, tous trahissaient leur impatience par une agitation et un bavardage incessants. Ils s'interpellaient, se défiaient sans relâche, sans qu'on pût deviner si c'était par jeu ou par une volonté sérieuse de faire prévaloir quelque pressante vérité.

Après qu'ils eurent arpenté en plusieurs sens, alternant marches, courses et stations, quelques-unes des multiples allées du monde de Morgane Salmon, l'un des revenants, apparemment le plus âgé, crâne dégarni mais épais sourcils et favoris opulents, demanda à ses deux compagnons de lui prêter l'oreille. La veste sombre qu'il portait lui conférait une manifeste dignité, un gilet et un pantalon clairs, ornés de pois et de carreaux, y ajoutait une forme de plaisante fantaisie, de sorte qu'émanait du personnage une autorité simultanément incontestable et un peu excentrique.

Well, dit-il, ce que nous voyons là, vous en conviendrez, conforte mes théories. Car que voyons-nous ? La nature, rien que la nature ! Mais foisonnante, luxuriante. Nous voyons sa vitalité constante, son invention sans bornes, ses formes foisonnantes, mobiles, superposées



ou enchevêtrées les unes dans les autres, s'augmentant les unes les autres, se transformant par rencontres, fusions ou contrastes, passant ainsi d'état en état sans jamais se figer en un maintien définitif. Regardez, là – son index droit désignait un repli à la surface d'une grande céramique proliférante –, vous voyez

cette petite bestiole qui pointe son nez? N'est-elle pas, avec tout ce qui l'entoure, la recouvre et la révèle tout autant, une preuve vivante de l'évolution continue et de la transformation perpétuelle des espèces?



À côté de lui, un deuxième avatar, regard perçant et moustaches tombantes recouvrant sa bouche, ricanaît. *Ach so*, Charles, dit-il, tu es vraiment incorrigible! Il te faut à tout prix supposer dans la nature un sens général, alors que rien en elle, quand on l'observe lucidement, sans préjugé, ne l'indique. Pourquoi ne te contentes-tu pas de la pullulation des formes, de leur diversité infinie, de leurs singularités multiples, pourquoi ne parviens-tu pas à te réjouir sans réserve de la joyeuse anarchie des choses? Tu veux absolument trouver la confirmation d'une loi scientifique dans un bout de nez qui perce ou dans une fleur qui éclôt. Mais quelle tristesse, Charles, que cette nécessité de voir un Tout à l'œuvre là où s'ébattent si librement tant d'individus inflexibles, indomptables!

Charles se sentit un peu froissé, mais le ton exalté de son interlocuteur l'impressionnait. Quand il reprit, sa voix trahissait simultanément une nuance de timidité et la décision de rester ferme sur le fond. Tu ne me comprends pas, Friedrich, parce que tu ne retiens qu'une partie des réalités, leur apparence la plus superficielle, leur façade chatoyante. Tu oublies l'édifice, ses fondations, ses murs qui montent, le parachèvement de son toit; tu oublies que sans tout cela, la façade ne tiendrait pas!

Cette réplique incita le troisième revenant à s'introduire dans la conversation. C'était à l'évidence le plus jeune des trois,

mais son allure droite, un peu raide, son costume sombre et les bords abaissés de ses lèvres qui ne souriaient pas projetaient sur le personnage comme une aura sévère. Dans le monde de Morgane Salmon, voyez-vous, dit-il, ce n'est pas l'édifice qui fait tenir les apparences, c'est la couleur. C'est elle qui relie les formes, les accueille dans une relative unité sans porter atteinte à l'intégrité de chacune, c'est elle qui nous incite à croire en une évolution des choses de la nature. Eh oui, précisa-t-il pour apaiser l'incompréhension qu'il discernait sur le visage de ses compagnons, ce monde montre ce qu'aurait pu, ce que peut-être aurait dû être l'autre monde, le monde naturel, s'il était parvenu jusqu'au terme de son mouvement.

Pure chimère! l'interrompt le premier. Pure fantaisie créatrice! rétorqua le deuxième.

Laissez-moi continuer, reprit l'avatar. Voilà ce que je suppose: le monde réel a été créé pour qu'à la fin triomphe dans la nature, partout, dans son ensemble et dans ses moindres détails, la couleur. Mais la nature – je ne sais pourquoi – s'est arrêtée en chemin. Certes, il y a bien en elle une diversité foisonnante de couleurs; mais elles sont disséminées, inégalement réparties, et l'on ne peut faire mieux que soupçonner, trop vaguement, le dessein général d'une assomption colorée du monde. C'est pourquoi il faut dans ce monde inclure d'autres mondes, plus petits, plus artificiels, apparemment plus arbitraires, mais dans lesquels s'accomplit vraiment ce qui n'est ailleurs qu'ébauché. Dans ces autres mondes, et surtout, dirais-je, dans le monde de Morgane Salmon, les matières se trouvent travaillées jusqu'à ce qu'elles revêtent les formes qu'elles auraient eues si la Création était arrivée à sa fin: jusqu'à ce qu'elles deviennent de purs réceptacles de couleurs.

Friedrich donna alors à l'orateur une très franche accolade. Marcel, s'exclama-t-il, ton hypothèse d'un darwinisme chromatique me plaît bien! Justement parce



qu'elle me paraît tout à fait folle! Tu vois, Charles, ajouta-t-il en s'adressant au premier revenant, pas besoin de tes lourdeurs scientifiques: les fins, les sens, les directions, il est tellement plus gai de s'autoriser à les inventer! D'accord pour un peu de darwinisme, mais artistique, que diantre!

Mais Charles n'était, on le comprend, pas très content. Cependant, essaya-t-il de riposter, comment pouvez-vous à ce point dissocier ce qui se passe dans le monde de Morgane Salmon et ce qui se passe dans la nature réelle des choses? Comment pouvez-vous ne trouver que dans le premier des formes d'accomplissement et abandonner le monde effectif à une ingrate imperfection, à une décevante insuffisance? Ne voyez-vous pas que la beauté se trouve aussi dans la nature?

Mais si, reprit Marcel, nous le voyons bien. Mais qu'est-ce qui témoigne au mieux de cette beauté? Les éruditions revêches? La fantaisie des récits? Écoutez-moi, je vais vous raconter une histoire.

Depuis les premiers élans de la Création, tout avait été préparé pour que le monde entier devienne une éclatante affirmation de la couleur. Dissimulées dans les minéraux, dans les essences végétales, apparentes ou attendant l'intervention des humains, les prémisses de ce monde étaient là, à disposition, comme des possibilités livrées à la sagacité de ceux à qui serait confiée la responsabilité de mener à terme le processus ainsi esquissé. Passer de l'ébauche à la réalisation, ce serait le sens donné à l'action humaine. Les humains recueilleraient les indices, traces et matériaux, les adapteraient et petit à petit achèveraient dans des explosions de couleurs l'œuvre commencée. Ils apprendraient à traiter les matières, terres et pigments, plantes et écorces, feuilles et herbes, à pétrir et à modeler des formes, à les illuminer de toute la diversité de leur imagination chromatique et ainsi à composer l'environnement vivant, joyeux, flagrant sans domination, multiple sans dispersion, uni sans exclusive, tel qu'il était projeté depuis la

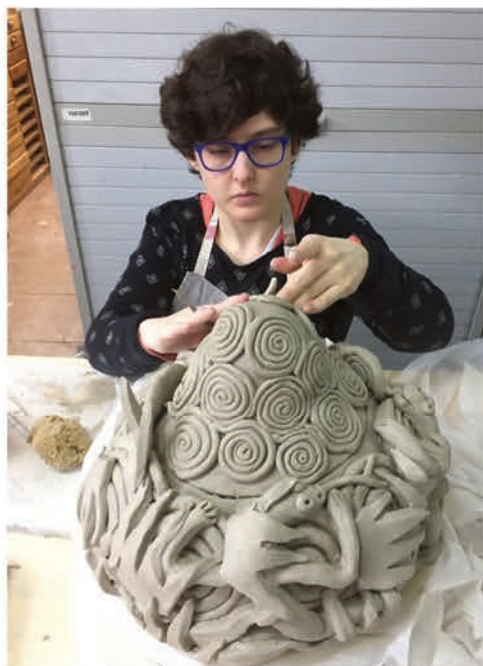




Jean Jérôme

Échanges avec Morgane Salmon

La nature à ma façon



*L*a vie dans la nature. La nature avec les fleurs, les animaux et les feuilles est mon jardin secret.

La nature, comme source d'inspiration, est partout présente dans la production de Morgane Salmon, sous l'apparence foisonnante d'éléments floraux et animaliers. *Si je vois un espace vide je le remplis, je n'aime pas le vide. C'est comme la nature... C'est seulement quand je ne peux plus rien ajouter que la pièce est terminée.*

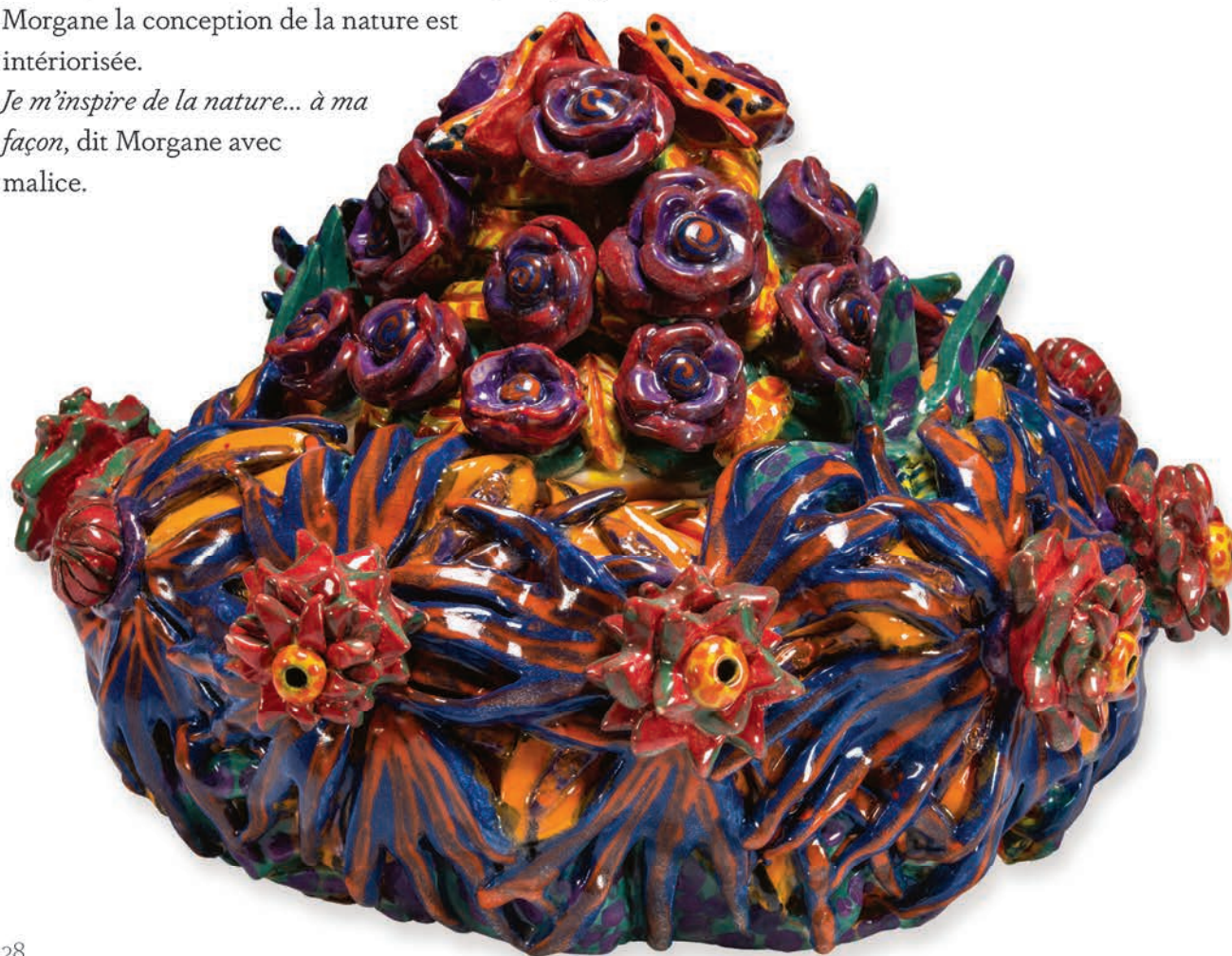
La nature y est présente aussi de manière plus secrète ou moins visible car enfouie sous une profusion d'ornements. La base est souvent de forme spiralaire, véritable principe structurant de la pièce : *Je commence toujours par une spirale.* Cette structure spiralaire sera masquée par la répétition d'autres spirales devenant motifs sur lesquels vont éclore des formes florales entrelacées, ponctuées et rythmées par un amas de motifs végétaux (feuillages), en écho avec la diversité, le foisonnement, caractéristiques de la nature. *Pour le décor, je travaille par couches. D'abord les spirales, ensuite les animaux (serpents ou lézards) ou pas, puis les feuilles, qui les cachent ou pas, et les fleurs. Enfin, en dernier, les animaux (papillons, colibris) ou pas. Comme dans la*

*nature, les animaux sont souvent cachés par les feuilles...
Et c'est ça qui donne la forme finale de ma pièce.*

Les pièces de Morgane ne sont pas issues de moules préconçus. On est loin de la perfection mécanique attendue et appliquée par certains artisans qui cherchent à représenter de façon plus stéréotypée ou plus conventionnelle la nature.

La nature c'est la vie. Le vivant. Ce n'est pas figé. Ce n'est pas statique. C'est vivant, c'est tout. Les différents éléments qui constituent la pièce ont la même singularité que les formes observées dans la nature. En apparence toutes pareilles, cependant toutes différentes. *J'essaie de créer la vie, le mouvement, le volume... Je joue avec les fleurs, certaines fermées, certaines ouvertes...* On aura compris que pour Morgane la conception de la nature est intériorisée.

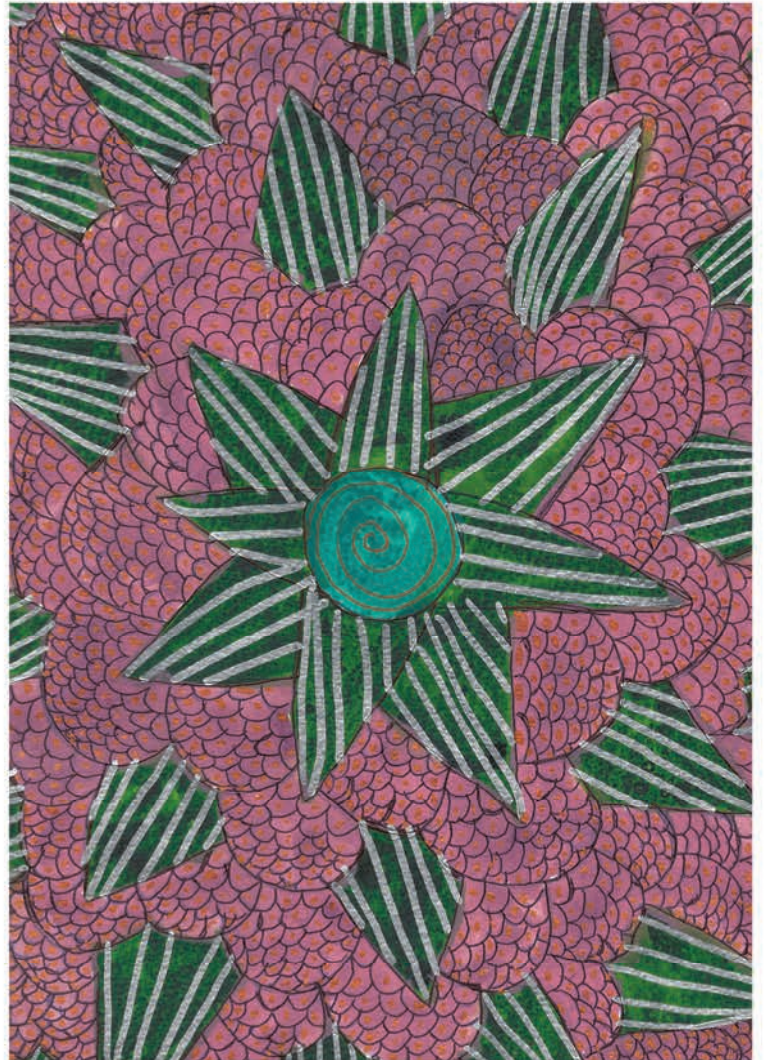
Je m'inspire de la nature... à ma façon, dit Morgane avec malice.













Il ne faut pas se compliquer la vie



Baroque, foisonnant, saturé, voire obsessionnel autant de qualificatifs qui s'appliquent à l'univers créatif de Morgane Salmon. À confronter ses différentes pièces, un observateur plus attentionné décèlera, cachée sous la profusion des formes, une structure voire un système opératoire bien ordonné.

Système combinatoire à partir d'un répertoire de motifs et de couleurs récurrents. *Je répète toujours la même chose... ça me rassure, c'est agréable, car je ne fais pas d'erreurs. Je m'organise. Je fais une plaque et je découpe toutes mes feuilles. Ensuite je fais une autre plaque et je découpe tous les pétales de mes fleurs... Je suis donc plus libre et assurée.*

Cette démarche de création, qu'elle se donne pour se rassurer, n'est cependant pas déterminée une fois pour toutes par l'artiste qui est libre ou reste libre dans ses élans. *Il ne faut pas se compliquer la vie*, propos souvent énoncés par Morgane. Être entièrement libre et créer spontanément lorsqu'elle décore sans besoin de réfléchir à ce qu'elle fait, *si je réfléchis ça me bloque.*





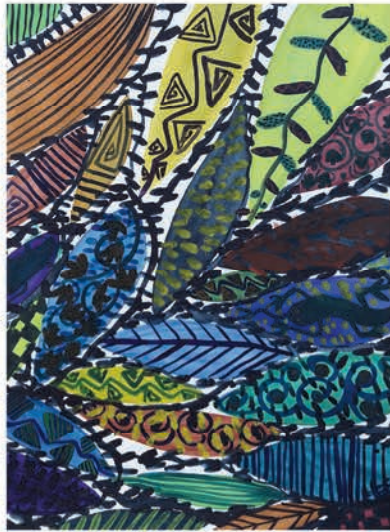






















Expositions



Expositions personnelles

Les Jardins de Gaïa à l'heurgothique, Wittisheim, 2021

CarnivoZOOres, la florifaune de Morgane Salmon,

Jardins de la Ferme Bleue, Uttenhoffen, 2019

Fous de couleurs, Atelier d'Aymery Rolland, Gries, 2018

Kaléidoscope, travaux récents de Morgane Salmon,

Pavillon du Lieu d'Europe, Strasbourg, 2017

Le Bestiaire de Morgane, Jardins de la Ferme Bleue,

Uttenhoffen, 2014

Pour le plaisir des autres, Musée de la Poterie, Betschdorf,

2007



Expositions collectives, sélection

Biennale internationale d'Art Brut, Hengelo NL, 2023

Le marché des Tupiniers du vieux Lyon, Lyon, 2023

Biennale de la céramique, parcours sculpture, Dieulefit, 2023

Biennale de la céramique, parcours sculpture, Guebwiller, 2023

Des creux des bosses, biennale de la céramique singulière,

Saint-Pierre-le-Vigé, 2022

Trésors, les insectes et leur environnement, Galerie Aedaen,

Strasbourg, 2021

Terralha, Festival de la céramique contemporaine,

Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, 2021

Objets magiques / Écomusée, Ungersheim, 2020-2021

Nouvelle vague / Parcours Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, 2020

Céramiques of course, 2 / Galerie Art Course, Strasbourg, 2018

Décors, j'adore!, exposition organisée par l'Institut Européen

des arts céramiques, Musée Théodore Deck, Guebwiller,

2017

*Résonnances, salon des métiers d'art, Strasbourg — 2016, 2017,
2018*

Prix d'encouragement Rotary Club Ouest en 2016

Commandes artistiques

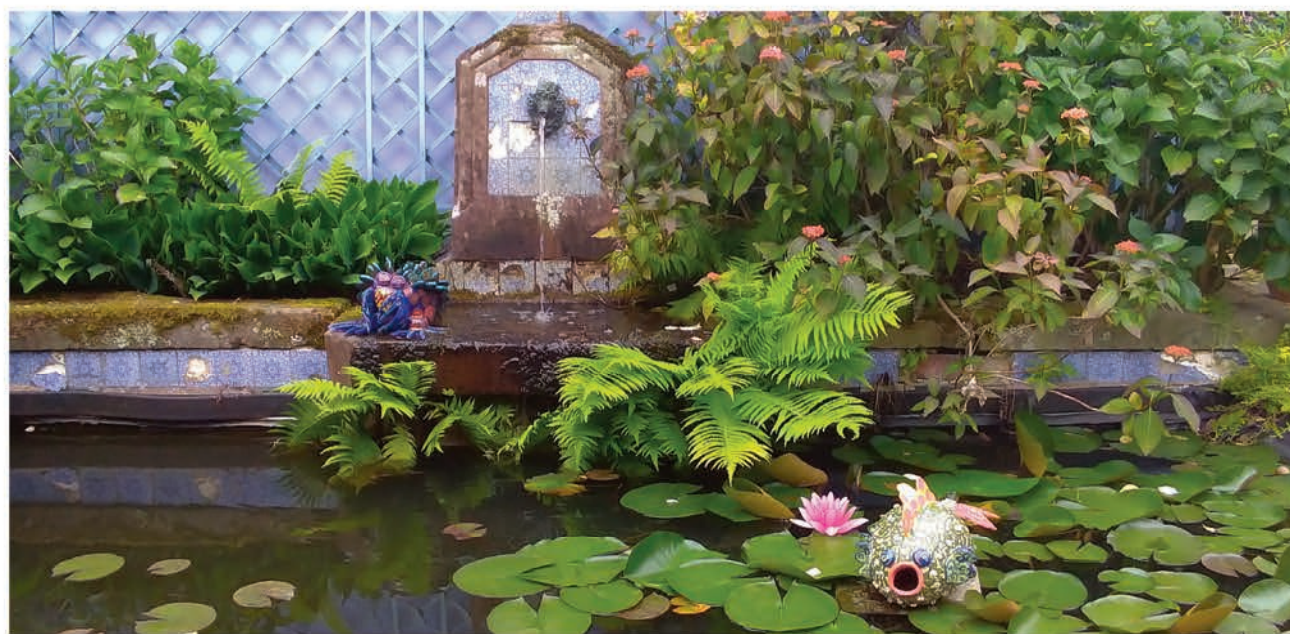
Pour le livre « *Le grillon enquête* » écrit par Eva Hébert,

2022 : 16 insectes en faïence vernissée et lustre or

Pour le troupe de théâtre *Mythe de la taverne* :

22 figurines en céramique pour les performances *Secrets
des rues*, 2015, Ville de Haguenau

4 figurines en céramique pour le spectacle *Personnages :
Couleurs et sons*, 2008, Musée d'art moderne, Strasbourg



Note sur la technique

Les céramiques de Morgane Salmon sont exclusivement en faïence vernissée avec deux cuissons : l'une à basse température (1000°) pour le biscuit qu'elle a peint au préalable avec des engobes de couleurs très vives. La deuxième cuisson plus haute (1036°) se fait après le recouvrement des pièces avec une couverte transparente et brillante qui leur confère ainsi un éclat fortement réfléchissant. Toutes ses pièces sont montées à la main en colombin et/ou en plaques qu'elle recouvre entièrement de motifs gravés, modelés et peints. Elle explore également les possibilités pour renforcer ses décors avec des lustres or et argent qui impliquent une troisième cuisson. Toutes les peintures sont des aquarelles sur papier, souvent rehaussées d'encres métalliques.



Morgane Salmon. That's how it is

Chromatic Spectres: a Conversation

At the beginning of the year 2022, on a beautiful cold and sunny morning, the world of Morgane Salmon received a visit from three surprising avatars. They arrived together without warning, quickly and purposefully pushing open the door, as if they already had a clear idea of what kind of place it was and what they were going to find there. All of them seemed driven by an irrepressible curiosity, all betrayed their impatience by their ceaseless bustle and chatter. They called upon each other, challenged each other insistently, without it being possible to guess whether this was in a spirit of play or out of a serious desire to make some pressing truth prevail.

After they had paced some of the numerous pathways of Morgane Salmon's world in several directions, alternately walking, running or standing still, one of the spectres, apparently the oldest, with a bald head, thick eyebrows and opulent sideburns, asked his two companions to lend him an ear. The dark jacket he wore gave him manifest dignity; a light waistcoat and trousers, dappled with polka dots and checks, added an amusingly fanciful touch, so that the personage emanated an authority that was at once incontestable and a little eccentric.

Now, he said, you will agree that what we see here confirms my theories. And what do we see? Nature, nothing but Nature! Plentiful Nature, luxuriant Nature. We see its constant vitality, its boundless inventivity, its plentiful, mobile forms, stratified or entwined in one another, expanding or transforming one another through encounters, blends or contrasts, and thus passing from one condition to another without ever freezing into a state of permanence. Look there – his right index finger pointed to a fold on the surface of a large proliferating ceramic – do you see this little creature pointing its nose in the air? Is it not – with everything that surrounds it, covers it and at the same time reveals it – a living proof of the



continuous evolution and perpetual transformation of species?

Next to him, a second avatar, with a piercing gaze and his mouth masked by a drooping mustache, snorted. *Ach so*, Charles, he said, you are truly incorrigible! You must at all costs assume a general meaning in Nature when, if we observe it lucidly and without prejudice, nothing in it indicates this. Why are you not content with the proliferation of forms, with their infinite diversity, with their multiple individualities, why are you unable to rejoice without reservation in the joyful anarchy of things? You absolutely want to find confirmation of a scientific law in the tip of a nose peeping out or in a flower blooming. But how sad, Charles, is this need to see an All at work, where so many obdurate, indomitable individuals frisk about so freely!

Charles felt a little offended, yet he was impressed by his interlocutor's exalted tone. When he continued, his voice simultaneously betrayed a trace of shyness and his determination to remain firm on fundamentals. You don't understand me, Friedrich, because you only take into account part of the realities, their most superficial appearances, their shimmering facade. You forget the edifice, its foundations, its rising walls, its roof completed; you forget that without all this, the facade would not hold up!

This reply prompted the third spectre to enter the conversation. He was obviously the youngest of the three, but his erect, somewhat stiff bearing, his dark suit and the downturned edges of his unsmiling lips gave the character a rather stern

appearance. But don't you see? he said, In Morgane Salmon's world, it's not the edifice that maintains appearances, it's colour. It is colour that connects the forms, that blends them into relative unity without compromising the integrity of each; it is colour that encourages us to believe in an evolution of the things of nature. Yes, he added, to allay the puzzlement he could make out on the faces of his companions, this world shows what the other world, the natural world, could have been; perhaps what it should have been, if it had been left to run its course.

A pure pipe dream! the first one interrupted him. Pure creative fantasy! retorted the second.

Allow me to continue, the avatar went on. This is what I surmise: the real world was created so that in the end what should triumph in Nature, everywhere, as a whole and down to its smallest details was... colour. But Nature – I know not why – stopped somewhere along the way. Certainly, there is in it a teeming diversity of colours; but they are scattered, unevenly distributed, and we can do no better than suspect – alas, too vaguely! – the general design of a colourful “assumption” of the world. This is why it is necessary to include in this world other worlds that are smaller, more artificial and apparently more arbitrary, but in which what is only sketched elsewhere is truly accomplished. In these other worlds and, I would say, above all in the world of Morgane Salmon, materials are worked upon until they take on the forms they would have had if Creation had run its course: until they become pure colour reservoirs.



Friedrich then gave the speaker a very uncompromising hug. Marcel, he exclaimed, I like your theory of a chromatic version of Darwinism! Even if it's because I find it completely absurd! You see, Charles, he added, addressing the first spirit, no need for your scientific complexity: ends, meanings, directions – it's so much more amusing to let yourself invent them! A bit of Darwinism, all right. But for goodness sake, let it at least be artistic!

But, understandably, Charles was not very happy. He attempted a rejoinder. No! How can you separate what is happening in Morgane Salmon's world from what is happening in the real nature of things? How can you find forms of fulfilment only

in the former and abandon the actual world to a state of regrettable imperfection, of disappointing insufficiency? Don't you see that beauty is also to be found in nature?"

Of course, Marcel went on, we can see that clearly. But what best demonstrates this beauty? Arid erudition? Narrative fantasy? Listen. I'm going to tell you a story.

From the first impulses of Creation, everything had been prepared for the whole world to become a dazzling affirmation of colour. Concealed in minerals, in plant essences, already apparent or awaiting the intervention of humans, the initial postulates of this world were there, at our disposal. They were possibilities submitted to the wise management of those responsible for completing the process that had been sketched out. Moving from the rough draft to the realisation would thus be seen as the meaning of human action. Humans would collect signs, traces and materials, would adapt them and gradually complete the work begun, in bursts of colour. They would learn how to process their materials – clays and pigments, plants and bark, leaves and herbs – to knead and model shapes, to illuminate them with all the diversity of their chromatic imagination and thus to compose the living, joyful environment envisaged from the dawn of time, resplendent without domination, multiple without dispersion, united without exclusion. But the process was interrupted. Why? No doubt because humans forgot the ways of questioning and deciphering nature which would have allowed them to unearth the possibilities contained, sheltered and concealed there. No doubt they were taken up with other goals, other interests,

other emergencies. Whatever the reason, the impetus was lost, it dried up. And the world would have remained in this painful shrivelled state, had not a few of these humans sought to start out again from the beginning, had they not endeavoured to repeat in their workshops the movements that create the world of colour and to pursue them to the point of the small, unique epiphanies represented by their works. And there you have the world of Morgane Salmon!

But Marcel, said the first speaker, what you're proposing is a myth, not a reasoned, demonstrated explanation.

Of course, Marcel replied, I don't claim to do otherwise. Myths are my job!

They had resumed their walk and, even if they clearly did not intend to give up their childish bickering, one could sense in their behaviour the growing effect of a sort of contentment. Their eyes caressed curves, became lost in inextricable intertwining, their pupils gathered the proofs of an inexhaustible, uncontrollable life; they increasingly abandoned themselves to the honest potency emanating from each of the pieces they contemplated, a phenomenon devoid of any ulterior motive or calculated intention.

The relative serenity which now surrounded them was not conducive to dissension. This is why, when, the avatar named Friedrich began to speak again after a few minutes of silence, he did so in a gentle, peaceful, fraternal manner; perhaps we could even sense a hint of a whimsical grimace beneath the speaker's invasive moustaches.

I remember, he confided, that in my previous existence I wrote a text entitled "The Colour-Blindness of Thinkers." The wording was a little provocative, there was something inquisitorial about it, as if I wished to question the clairvoyance of our philosophers. But what I wanted to suggest in reality was almost the opposite: how certain defects can have precious advantages. Having studied the Ancient Greeks a great deal, I realized that they used the same word for "the colour of dark hair, of the cornflower and the southern sea" and a single word for "the colours of the greenest plants, human skin, honey and yellow resins"; and thus that "their eye was blind to blue and green" and that they "saw instead of blue, a darker brown and instead of green, yellow". Amazing, isn't it?

But if today we see things differently, does this prove that we have fewer shortcomings than did my dear ancient Greeks? Oh no, and so much the better! On the one hand, these shortcomings contributed to their vision of Nature as being friendly and complicit, created in the same "tonality" as them – "bathed, so to speak, in the colourful aether of humanity" – and thus they helped them to "consider natural phenomena as gods and demigods, in short as anthropomorphic figures." And at the same time, they handed down to us profound wisdom. For to think at whatever period, ancient or modern, is, as they taught us, to paint the world "with fewer colours *than actually* exist," it is always to be "blind to certain colours." And thus, by transforming this relative blindness into peaceful existence in the cosmos, have they not taught us the virtues of our limits? Meditating on their positive bent, healthily determined as it was, I reached the conclusion that each of us, even today,

when we accept our “partial colour blindness,” is capable of perceiving all the wide fields in which we can “strive to achieve a richer and more differentiated vision.” The real blindness would be to blot out these still undreamt-of spaces, in which myriads of new, unexpected, exhilarating shapes and colours await us.”

And this is what the world of Morgane Salmon invites us to: we enter it with our little formal, chromatic grammar, always of necessity somewhat narrow, and the more we explore it, the more we discover melodic lines, harmonic complexities, daring points and counterpoints, constellations of rhythms and tones indefinitely expanding our visual syntaxes, amplifying our perceptions, encouraging our reception of unusual, benevolent, stimulating phenomena.

After the pause that followed, a little longer than the previous one, the first avatar said that Friedrich’s speech had seemed really strange to him, but well, why not... And the third muttered under his breath that, to him too, all this seemed very debatable, but that as it was for a good cause, he might still consider subscribing to it. Thus they realised that, beneath their differences, they had found common ground, and at this they rejoiced out loud. Whereupon, having observed this joyful consensus, they took off as they had come, leaving Morgane Salmon’s world without warning, in a flash.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

As I was typing the final words of the preceding text, I felt something breathing down the back of my neck. It wasn’t hard to guess where it came from. They were there, all three of them, peering



over my shoulder at the lines displayed on the screen in front of me. Contrary to what one might think, spectres in their cancelled universes are neither indifferent nor reclusive. So I was not surprised to hear the following words being whispered in my ear, gently but firmly, It’s fine to say a few words about us, Daniel. But you shouldn’t leave us buried in anonymity. At least you can tell them who we are!

Darwin, added the voice, Charles Darwin. I died, it seems, in 1882, but I believe that people still talk about me a little in your time. I must admit that I don’t understand much of our friend Friedrich’s speculations (probably I didn’t live in the right place

to appreciate sophisms of this kind) and that Marcel's myths are very foreign to me, but I readily admit that both amuse me and that in this case I approve of their conclusions.

A little later, another voice: Friedrich, it said, Friedrich Nietzsche, you recognized me; I left you in 1900, but I know that you have not completely forgotten me and I am very glad of this, even if at certain times I would have preferred a little less fuss being made around my name. The sentences of mine that you quote, you can tell them that you found them in a book published in 1881, a book entitled *Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die Moralischen Vorurtheile* [*Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, Cambridge University Press, 1997].

And then finally, Marcel Griaule, 1898-1956. Perhaps you know my book *Dieu d'Eau (God of Water)*? In any case, I will ask my Dogon informants what colours they can make out on the surface of nature and which ones they sense in their still invisible worlds; I am sure that their answers will have nothing to make them envy those of Friedrich's dear Greeks.

Whereupon they all left together in a great burst of (chromatic) laughter, through which I could hear the words, starting to fade but still clearly audible: And above all, don't forget to greet Morgane and thank her on our behalf!

Once more, without any noise, without leaving the slightest trace, they had disappeared, just as if they had evaporated.

DANIEL PAYOT



Talking with Morgane Salmon

Nature my own way

Life in Nature. Nature – with its flowers, animals and leaves – this is my Secret Garden. Nature as a source of inspiration is to be found everywhere in Morgane Salmon's output, swarming as it does with floral and animal motifs. *If I see an empty space I fill it, I don't like emptiness. It's like Nature... It's only when I can no longer add anything that the piece is finished.*

Nature is also present in a more secret or less visible way, because it lies buried under a profusion of ornaments. The basis of the work is often a spiral shape – *I always start with a spiral* – and this is the true structuring principle of the piece. This structure will be masked by the repetition of other spirals, becoming patterns of blossoming intertwined floral shapes, punctuated and interspersed by a mass of plant motifs (foliage), echoing the diversity and the profusion of nature. *For the decor, I work in layers. First the spirals, then the animals (snakes or lizards) – or not – then the leaves, which hide them – or not – then the flowers. Finally, to end with, the animals (butterflies, hummingbirds) – or not. As in nature, animals are often hidden by leaves... And that's what gives my piece its final shape.*

Morgane's pieces do not come from preconceived moulds. We are far from the mechanical perfection expected and applied by certain craftsmen, who seek to represent nature in a more stereotyped or conventional way. *Nature is life. Something that's*

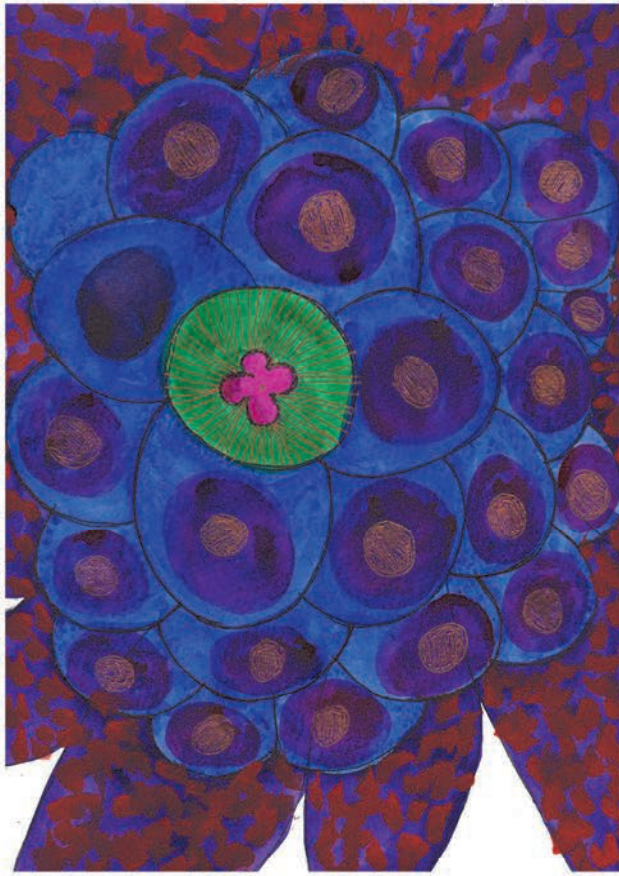
alive. It's not petrified. It's not static. It's alive, that's all. The different parts that make up the piece have the same uniqueness as shapes observed in nature. They are apparently all the same, and yet they are all different. *I try to create life, movement, volume... I play with flowers, some are closed, some open...* We realize that, for Morgane, the idea of nature is internalized. *I am inspired by Nature... in my own way,* says Morgane mischievously.



Don't complicate your life

Baroque, overflowing, saturated, even obsessive, these are all descriptions that apply to the creative world of Morgane Salmon. By comparing its different parts, a more attentive observer will detect a structure or even a well-ordered operating system hidden under this profusion of forms.

A combinatorial system based on a repertoire of recurring patterns and colours. *I always repeat the same thing... it reassures me, it's nice, because I don't make mistakes. I get organized. I roll out a clay slab*



and I cut out all my leaves. Then I roll out another slab and I cut out all (the petals of) my flowers... Then I feel freer and more confident.

However, this creative approach, which she adopts to reassure herself, is not determined once and for all by the artist, who is free or remains free in her impulsiveness. *Don't complicate your life* is something Morgane often says. What she wants is to be completely free and create spontaneously when she decorates, without needing to think about what she is doing; *if I start thinking, it cramps my style.*

I'm no longer in control

How to get started? What to start with? To begin with, Morgane Salmon feels the need to give herself confidence. *I get organized. I start thinking.* What motivates her to begin with is the need to ascribe a function to the pots she is going to model or create. They are mostly objects for domestic use: vases, candy jars, bottles, sugar bowls. For each of them, she will always adopt the same method, what she calls *making things. All my objects have the same starting point, the snail, and then I go up, with coils, I go up and I create a shape or a volume. That's the base... It's like building a house... Then I'm free to create the decor, to express myself... I feel the urge to decorate.* Indeed, it is in "making" something that a sort of mutation or upheaval will take place, the result of an almost obsessive repetition of gestures in which Morgane, swept up by the exuberance of her ornamentation, does not hesitate to test the limits of her material. Ultimately it is the material that will determine the nature of her creation, to the point of becoming something else. At the end of this "hectic", "adventurous" phase, one which she perfectly accepts, the object takes on a life of its own. In Morgane's own words, *I'm no longer in control, I just let it happen. Normally a vase is something you decorate, it doesn't move, but here I get the feeling that when I over-decorate, the vase, or whatever piece it is, starts falling; it is alive, it decides to be like that, it's a kind of life. It's the pot that does this; it wavers, as if it was alive... I'm not in control any more.*

Are these not echoes of the animist spirit, of animist thought, the object signifying to Morgane that its assembly is now completed, thereby depriving her of her own creation?

That's how it is

With Morgane Salmon, there is no strategy, but there is what's needed to get things done.

I let it happen. I can't decide. It's my hands, then I create, then I decorate. Afterwards maybe it's no longer a candy jar, it's something else... I accept that, that's how it is.

This operating mode is not calculated. The effects are not premeditated. The accident is allowed to happen and the object, a vase for example, is allowed to go awry – if that is its truth... *I say to myself too bad, that's how it is – and I leave it.*

Let's take the example of the vase again. Beneath the profusion of its ornamentation, the viewer does not always perceive what was intended when it was being put together; does he even identify it as a vase? And in any case this is all the same to him. It is only in the visual shock, experienced on contact with the object, that the truth can be perceived or even glimpsed. *I make it, but people decide whether they're going to use it, and how. That's not my problem.*

When I make a candy jar, I never ask the question whether people can use it or not. What matters is creating.

It's up to them whether they want to use it or not.

Colour, positive energy

During her years of training, colour for Morgane Salmon was often just a way of “clothing” form. Morgane used pastel colours to conform to her teachers' “good taste”. But looking back, she says that she



wanted to *do away with these drab colours*. Did the fact of using watercolour contribute to the radical change in her colour palette? At first glance this seems paradoxical. Watercolour is the medium used to create effects of transparency. But Morgane makes a completely different use of it in her two-dimensional works. What she maintains is the liveliness, the saturation, the purity of colour seen in her paints. She uses it more pictorially, to preserve the intensity of the pigments by favoring strong contrasts in a wholly intuitive way. *I don't like transparencies in watercolour. I like pure pigments much more. I love beautiful, bright colours.* This became just as true of her ceramics.

Color is therefore given the power of energy. She puts it, just as she puts herself, on the positive side of things. *Then in ceramics, I wanted things to go like a flash of lightning! Like a punch on the jaw!... Colour is the positive side... positive energy... bringing in colour brings joy.*



Linking up my three passions

Ceramics, watercolours, and engravings go to make up the keystone around which Morgane Salmon's activity is built. She moves easily from one to the other, a real mutation which, she says, allows her to *link up my three great passions*. Thus her ceramic explorations are restated in two dimensions in her watercolours and her engravings (her creative forms being transposed from the world of flowers and her personal bestiary). First I create with clay. It's clay I begin with, and then *I draw... I create flowers on the vases and then I draw them. It's as I feel it... I often draw freely to clear my mind. Then I feel better. Afterwards, I even make engravings of these flowers. I express myself in different ways.* Drawing on paper for her watercolours, on zinc for her engravings and on clay for her bowls and plates is therefore always based on the same approach. Moreover, Morgane makes a very clear distinction between the series of

drawings coming directly from her ceramic decorations and painted in dozens – *to help me relax*, and the drawings *I have to think about*, which she makes in advance *to give me something to start from*, to help her dream up, or come to terms with, a whole new theme: ouroboros and lanterns, for example.

When there is something I don't know, I use drawing to help me discover it.

Pleasure for others

In 2007, Morgane Salmon, then aged 20, saw her pieces exhibited for the first time in a setting that was dedicated to ceramics, the Pottery Museum in Betschdorf. The idea of the exhibition, entitled "Pleasure for Others", was to show her recent work, accompanied by a set of Klaus Stoeber's photographs taken in the homes of buyers, amateurs and friends. "...I wanted to discover the life led by Morgane's other ceramics, once they had left the kiln and the workshop."

This confrontation gave Morgane, for whom creation had been primarily *a pleasure for myself..., feeling the clay..., creating things..., making things with my hands*, an awareness which was to become an important stimulant in her creation: *pleasure for others... It makes me happy that people like what I do.* This is justified by the design of a ceramic object that can be used in their daily lives, at the same time enlivening their day-to-day routine. *It's important to me that objects can be used for different things, even just being set out as decoration.*

« *Heurgothique* » (Gothic Fortune)

From 2007-2011, Morgane Salmon followed an apprenticeship in art bookbinding. To finalize her training, Morgane created a number of “treasure bindings”, sorts of little showcases uniting her different graphic and ceramic works. Inspired by the medieval Books of Hours, they are a kind of momentary résumé of Morgane’s desire *to join the past to the present*, to join together her different means of expression: water-colours, engravings and glazed earthenware. These experiences culminated in Morgane’s coining of the term *Heurgothique*, a notion which became the core of her constantly evolving artistic world. *It’s a magical word. For me it means happiness, good luck, joy.*

Once freed from the constraints of learning, Morgane was able to open the doors of her Pandora’s box and fully occupy the space belonging to her personal creative work. This is a space of exploration and experimentation in the art of generating creative forms, of giving birth to what does not yet exist. But it is also a space in which the things to come will be embodied in all their uniqueness: carnivorous flowers, hybrid figures, lanterns...

I’m very shy, at least here I express myself... I express myself in my own language.

JEAN JÉRÔME



Morgane Salmon: A Jubilant and Unclassifiable Ceramicist.

“Art does not come to lie in the beds that have been made for it, it scampers off as soon as its name is uttered; what it likes is being incognito, its best moments are when it forgets what its name is”

Even if it immediately conjures up a profuse and high-spirited world of flowers and plants, Morgane Salmon’s two-dimensional work (the countless watercolours on paper that she has been producing since 2007), is far from being any kind of mimetic art. Although nature is always her starting point, Morgane never seeks to reproduce carefully observed flowers and foliage precisely from nature. She nourishes her inventivity in nature’s creative processes, in its principles of growth, proliferation, repetition and metamorphosis, rather than from its exact forms. She is inspired by “its teeming colours and shapes”² and “transforms them in (her own) way, through (her own) imagination”. She does not reproduce, she “produces”, prolifically, spontaneously, almost automatically, covering her paper with interlocking, repetitive patterns.

As an adept of “all-over” painting, Morgane repeats comparable patterns over the entire surface of her paper. Patterns that proliferate because no space is ever left unoccupied, gaps are always sidestepped. Yet the arrangement of these patterns has nothing geometrical about it; flowers, buds and foliage are scattered along undulating lines, on a linear structure full of curves and spirals.



Thus were born these exceptional watercolours, almost without the control of reason or preconceived ideas, works without edges or center, works which can be turned and overturned at will and which could go on to infinity. Like the patterns in a Raoul Dufy textile, like the works of Claude Viallat, Damien Hirst, or like the figurative and eminently decorative work of the “Pattern Painting” artists (Robert Zakanitch, Robert Kushner et al.), who in the mid-seventies offered an alternative to minimal and conceptual art by breaking down the boundaries between the fine and applied arts.

1. Jean Dubuffet, 1959. Reproduced in the catalog *Collection de l'Art Brut* Lausanne, 1976. Reprinted June 1986.

2. Comments by Morgane Salmon, booklet produced for the Terralha Ceramics Festival, Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, July 2021.

And then our artist's paintings of petals and foliage began to grow exorbitantly, becoming decorated with graphics and little painted dots, until these carnivorous flowers came to occupy the entire space of the page, now recalling Georgia O'Keeffe's famous large-scale flower paintings.

Using limited but saturated watercolour tints, Morgane demonstrates a very confident artistry of colour. Juxtaposing oranges and greens, orange-tinted reds and blues, purple-tinted blues and yellows, or whatever, she seems possessed of the ability to concentrate intensity. These colours, rarely mixed, used "out of the tube", give her works on paper an astonishing liveliness, reminiscent of the joyful character of African boubous or, once again, of the deeply personal language of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings with their vigorous chromaticism, seen at recent exhibitions in Paris and also Basel, where Morgane was able to admire them.³

If drawing and painting are a daily exercise for Morgane Salmon, her stylistic originality is expressed above all in her work as a ceramicist. As in her works on paper, what at first glance defines her coruscating three-dimensional creations is the special link she maintains with colour. In her Strasbourg workshop, she creates not only countless plates, bowls, pots, vases, basins, candy jars, boxes, tiles, but also enigmatic or playful figurines, and a whole bestiary in which lizards play a dominant role.

When she was still very young, Morgane learned from a Strasbourg ceramicist how to handle clay and to master the ancient technique of coil pottery. Solitary in her creation, set apart from artistic circles, academies or schools and taking no heed of audience expectations, she has worked for several decades to produce a whole host of ceramics with uncommon and often exuberant forms. In the invention of her pieces she has been creating her



3. See for example Georgia O'Keeffe, *Oriental Poppies*, 1927.



own aesthetic language and organizational structure and has remained faithful to these for the best part of the last twenty years. Production methods, gestures, technique, materials – all have remained the same, even if, over the years, the shapes have become more and more uninhibited (imperfections being accepted) and more and more baroque. Thus freed from the complexity of purely technical research, Morgane the ceramicist can directly give herself up to her nimble-fingeredness, letting herself be led in the assembly of her pieces by the immediacy of her inspiration. Each of her ceramics is unique. Each of her objects, becoming barely usable in the inventiveness displayed, hesitates between “art” and

craftsmanship, their use – much as our ceramicist is attached to it – remaining uncertain and wholly subordinate to their expressive language.

But we are not so much taken aback by the improbable, disconcerting shapes of the ceramics as by everything that swarms, clings, buds and hatches on their surfaces, or on the clay tablets used to make her tiles: lizards, insects and butterflies, often hidden or barely discernible, gigantic flowers with prominent buds, carnivorous plants, tangled foliage and still more. And, as in the watercolours mentioned above, the pure, deep, vibrant colours – obtained by what in ceramics are called “slips”, covering the raw clay pieces and embellished with a transparent enamel in the second firing – are extraordinarily lively. The clash of these colours gives a wonderful gaiety to Morgane’s creations.

Contemplating the fauna and flora that invade Morgane’s pieces, we are tempted to see a distant kinship with Bernard Palissy. But by their simplified shapes, their exaggerated proportions, their gleaming and arbitrary colours, they clearly stand out from the naturalistic research of the famous 16th century potter who, to create his “figulines rustiques”⁴ with maximum realism, used to cast from life the aquatic creatures of ponds and swamps.

The spontaneous growth of increasingly imposing pieces, never repetitive and emerging from her imagination without any specific intention – like her indifference as a ceramicist to any technical

4. “Rustic wares”, enamelled pottery decorated with relief figures of animals.

perfection – seem to distinguish her work from that of the craftsman. She has no desire to spend time mastering her kiln or exploring the world of enamels. For her, ceramics is a material to be shaped and not the material of a whole assortment of given forms handed down over the centuries from generation to generation. Morgane uses potters' clay as an immediate means of expression, and as a support for colour.

It seems clear that Morgane is participating “in her own way” in a widespread trend to which many visual artists – in countless exhibition venues for the last ten years or so – have been wholly devoting themselves: the rebirth and new visibility of ceramics. At the same time, we can scarcely associate her with the contemporary creators who try their hand at ceramic sculpture at a given moment in their career, artists like Miquel Barcelo, Thomas Schütte, Claudio Parmiggiani or Fabrice Hyber.

Morgane's creations belong to the world of ceramists and not to that of the pictorial arts; they are not accompanied by a project, a discourse or “verbalizing” of any kind. They are primarily instinctive, spontaneous, modest, and linked to their utilization, a function

which they have never completely renounced (“this is a cachepot”, she tells us, “this is a candy jar”, and among her latest creations are “lanterns that light the way”).

We may wonder, however, whether Morgane can be compared to those “headstrong, soliloquizing seers” who, according to Dubuffet, make up the Art Brut brigade? “Crude Art”, “Outsider Art”, “Folk Art”, “Unusual Art”? These labels are often largely interchangeable, while applying to the same type of creator: self-taught and following an unorthodox vocation.

This is the case with Morgane; but in contrast to Roger Cardinal's notion of “Outsider Art”⁵, she is not an artist outside culture and society, she is not a socially isolated creator; she likes to show her pieces, exhibiting them in gardens, fairs or galleries. We must therefore go beyond Dubuffet's unduly strict and limiting definitions and not forget, with regard to Morgane Salmon's spontaneous and expressive work, that “where hybrids are concerned, countless variants may exist ...” and that “we should look at art brut as a trend rather, like a wind blowing more or less strongly, and which is generally not the only one blowing.”⁶



5. The term he proposed in his 1979 London exhibition on Art Brut.

6. Jean Dubuffet, 1959, *op. cit.*



When we look at Morgane's development of a visual language in her watercolours and ceramics, or at her pieces fashioned in clay, still destined for use and yet startlingly distinctive, it is clear that "the wind of art brut" is not the only one blowing, far from it. Morgane Salmon remains an out-of-the-ordinary ceramicist, who succeeds in combining the creation of utilitarian objects with uninhibited artistic activity.

NADINE LEHNI

Notes on technique

Morgane Salmon uses the same technique for all of her ceramics, glazed earthenware, that requires two firings. First, the biscuit firing, she fires her pieces that have already been painted with bright and colourful underglazes at low temperature (1000°C). Her second firing is at 1036°C after having covered her biscuit with a transparent glossy glaze that intensifies her colours and makes them sparkle. All of her pieces are handmade, using coils and slabs, that she entirely covers with engraved, modeled and painted shapes and patterns inspired by nature. She now explores the possibilities of enhancing her decors with silver and gold, implying a third firing.

All of Morgane's paintings are watercolours on paper that she often highlights with metallic ink drawings.





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En couverture : Bonbonnière aux fleurs de roche bleue et orange, 2018 (détail)

En 4^e page de couverture : De la série *Les fleurs carnivores lotus au twinkle center*, 2019 (détail)

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