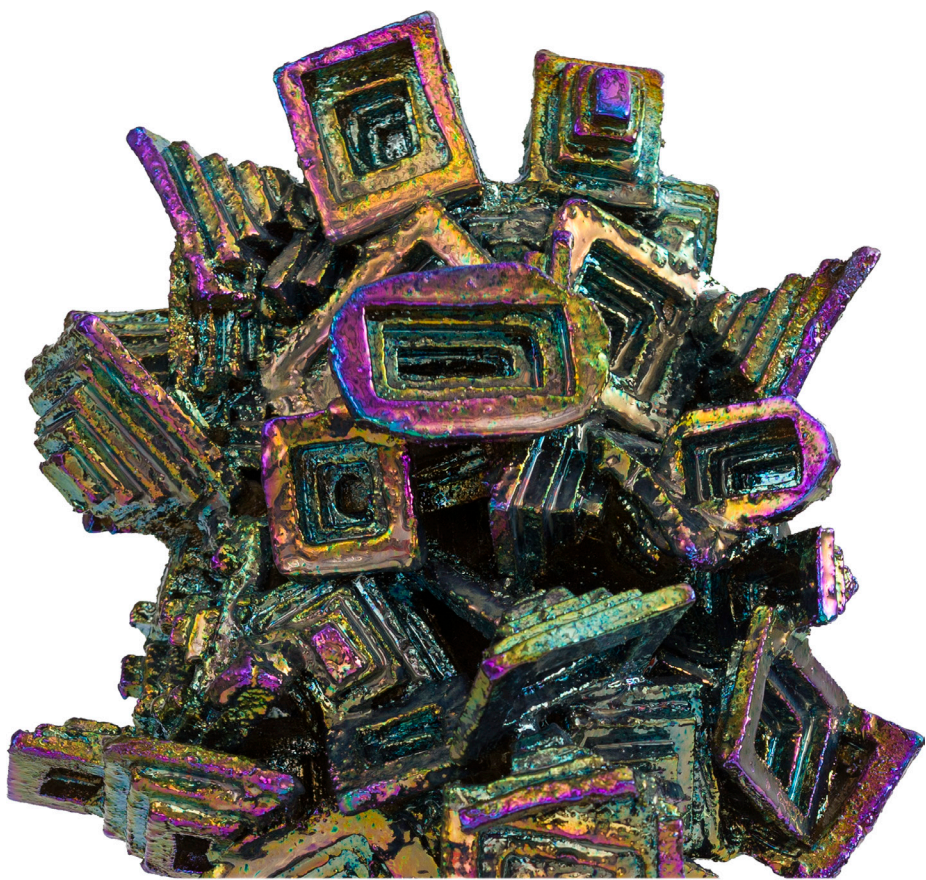


# Les Guérillères

JULIA KUNIN





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MARCH 10 - APRIL 25, 2015



SANDRA GERING INC

# Julia Kunin Can Take the Heat

In the 1990s, before every sculptor announced that her practice was driven by research, when formalist feminism was forging through more narrative and less handmade times, and even before Google, Julia Kunin was making intensely researched, crafted and formal feminist work.

The primary materials of the works have certainly changed over the years – from leather to glass to ceramics – Kunin's voracious appetite for the cultural, material and historical contexts of her making persists. To talk to Kunin about the work is to open a labyrinth of sources, from the biographic to the scientific. A conversation that piques her curiosity about a historical material practice leads to an international excursion, leads to learning the local language (Italian? Georgian? Hungarian?), and then to a slew of cultural influences that are perhaps completely incongruous with the initial historical material practice (such as an interest in all the international locations where locks are applied to architecture as an expression of the promise of love). In all, Kunin fuels her "free associations" with a wealth of specific art historical and technical knowledge accumulated through years of study, critical thinking and research methods. What's more, Kunin's capacity to learn new languages with relative ease allows her to work with expert craftsmen and women wherever they live.

Kunin's most recent work has a clear affinity with the specific craft traditions of the Austro-Hungarian regions, a second home. Influenced strongly by the aesthetics of Middle Europe, at first glance Kunin's ceramics seem in tune with the syncopated, metallic compositions of Gustav Klimt. However, all kinds of painterly effects are called into play on these highly reflective, glazed surfaces. Kunin's moving planes, colorful fractals and playful sculptural associations recall another Austrian artist, Hundertwasser. What Hundertwasser compartmentalizes in the composition of his



paintings, Kunin achieves as sculpted reliefs that animate light — even on her most three-dimensional forms. Fortright imagery seems to be “planted” in the raucous surface in order to make tiny bundles of color that seem to “bounce” off the eye. Kunin has spoken of her interest in the Hungarian-French artist Victor Vasarely, grandfather of what we now call “Op Art.” Into this mix of kinship, I’d add one more artist: Yaacov Agam, the Israeli artist born in Palestine in 1928. Of special interest here are his works that use lenticular wall constructions. What Agam provides through a structural rendition of print technology, Kunin delivers exponentially through ceramics. Every time you move in relation to Kunin’s work, the optical reception of glaze upon form is different. The effect is mesmerizing, seductive and radically decorative.

With a formal resemblance to sturdy panel supports covered with mid- to low-reliefs, Kunin’s current wall-mounted ceramic pieces can easily “cross over” to join the discourse around painting and the decorative. An even greater critical connection to painting lies in Kunin’s long investigation of sculpture via ceramics, since it’s these two crafts — painting and ceramics — that present extremely precise and unique relationships between support and surface. These powerful, often chemical relationships form a special site for Kunin. Holding onto her own conceptual construction — (painting + ceramics) x (surface + support) —is challenging enough. Add to it the problematic of “the decorative” and you begin to see how skillfully Kunin points to the feminist politics of form, craft and value.

Ever the sculptor, meaning is fused into Kunin’s work by means and materials, as well as physical composition and a post-Fried sense of audience participation.<sup>1</sup> In this light it’s important to note that the size of works is modest and the objects are scaled for close looking. Movement is therefore confined to our heads, bobbing

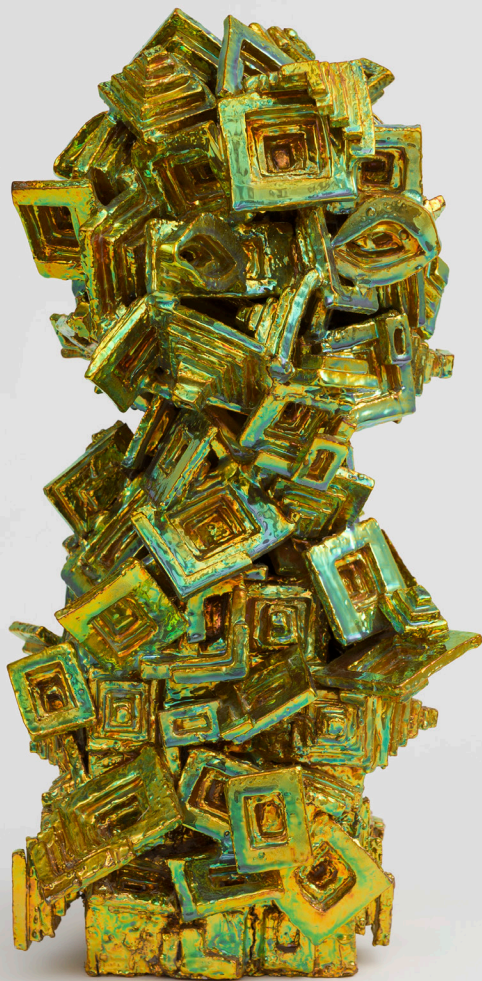
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1 Michael Fried: *Art and Objecthood*, in *Minimal Art* ed. by Gregory Battcock, (E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1968)

and shifting to catch the shimmering light of the fumed glassy surfaces. We follow the artist's linear and planar moves across the wall, or in and around the tabletop works. With the appearance of an occasional eye or orifice, Kunin's current imagery is often bodily, linking it back to her more overtly female work of the 1990s. Although the pieces containing human imagery appear somewhat Cubist, there is a powerful strain of Russian Constructivism that runs throughout Kunin's work. Some objects present a primacy of physical space reminiscent of Tatlin and Gabo (Pevsner). We are directed to geographic origins severed by pogrom. Allowing the eye to follow what was built in real space with real materials and real socio-political contexts seems at the core of Kunin's project.

At the heart of her practice, Kunin reveals that the opulent is built from dirt. Informed by fine art, science and geopolitics, the artist utilizes the most precise chemistries to create a logic that is uniquely her own — part organic, part crystalline and 100% fearless.

Sheila Pepe  
Brooklyn, NY  
2015



*Green Mirrors*, 2013, Ceramic, 20 ½ x 10 x 12 inches



*Woman at Keyhole*, 2014, Ceramic, 21 x 13 x 7 inches



*Woman at Observatory*, 2014, Ceramic, 22 x 14 x 10 inches

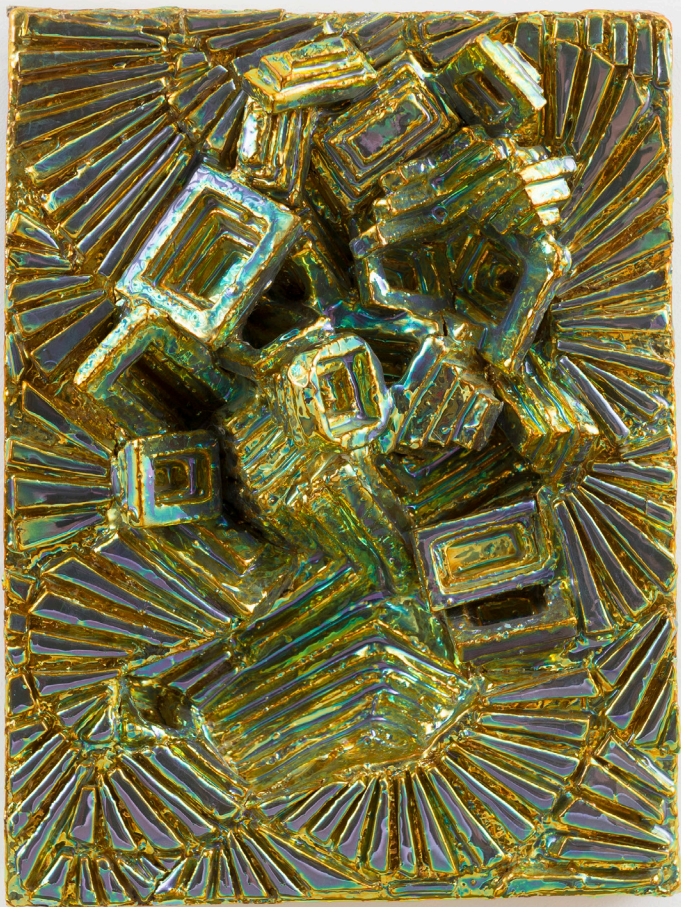


*Gold Lava*, 2013, Ceramic, 18 x 9 x 2 inches





*Purple Ruin*, 2014, Ceramic, 16 x 11 x 11 inches



*Uranium Phantom*, 2013, Ceramic, 13 ½ x 10 x 4 inches

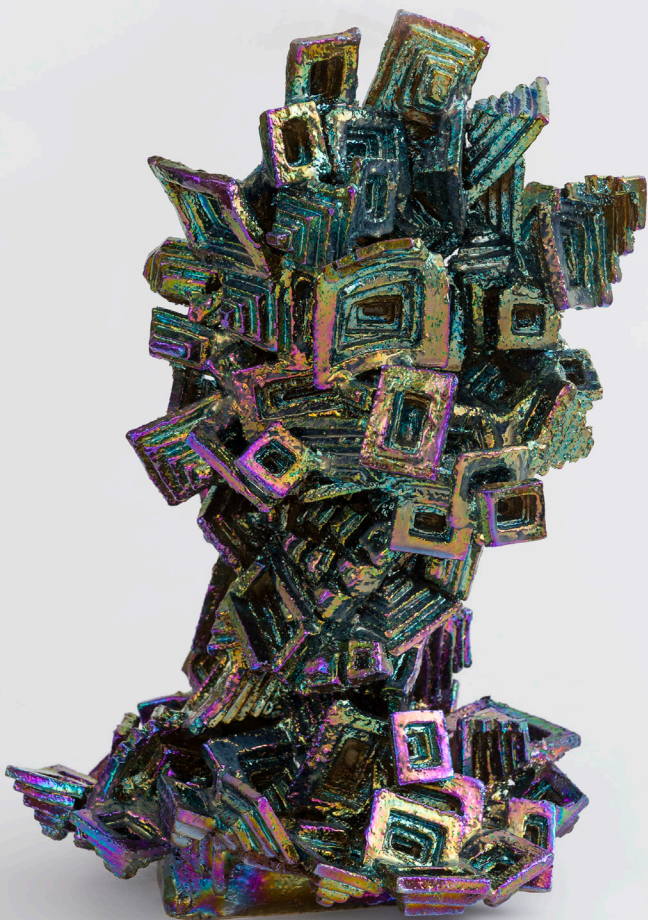




*Magenta Gem*, 2013, Ceramic, 13 ½ x 10 x 3 ½ inches



*Feathered*, 2014, Ceramic, 15 ½ x 10 x 7 ½ inches



*Bismuth II*, 2013, Ceramic, 21 x 15 x 13 inches



*Volcanic Green*, 2013, Ceramic, 15 x 10 x 6 inches





*After Jakovits, 2014, Ceramic, 15 x 10 x 2 inches*

Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

## EDUCATION

- 1993 MFA, Sculpture, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ  
1984 BA, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA  
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME  
1982 Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA

## SELECTED ONE AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Les Guérillères*, Sandra Gering Inc, New York, NY  
2014 *Le Boulon*, Independent Project, Untitled Art Fair, Miami, FL  
*Julia Kunin & Jackie Gendel*, Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, NY  
2013 *Golden Grove*, Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, TX  
*Farewell Ruins*, with Julia Haft-Candell, Inman Gallery, Houston, TX  
2012 *Nightwood*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY  
2007 *Against Nature*, with Emi Avora, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY  
2002 *Rotes Wildleder*, Deutsches Leder Museum, Offenbach, Germany  
2000 *Cephalopoden*, Bellevuesaal, Wiesbaden, Germany  
1999 *Crimson Suede*, Stefan Stux Gallery Project Room, New York, NY  
*Rambling Conversation series*, Four Walls, New York, NY  
*Old Gallery*, Tbsili, Georgia  
1998 *Julia Kunin & Bunny Harvey*, Daniel Spreng Gallery, Bern, Switzerland.

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Cleaning House*, MAMŰ Galéria, Budapest, Hungary  
*Zsolnay, Kapolna* Gallery, International Ceramic Studio, Kecskemet, Hungary  
*Nature's Knot*, Luise Ross Gallery, New York, NY  
2013 *Group Exhibition*, Nick Art and Design, Pecs, Hungary  
*Treasures from the German Leather Museum*, German Leather Museum, Offenbach, Germany  
*2Q13 Women Artists Women Collectors*, Marcelle Josephs Projects: Lloyd's Club, London, England  
*The Body is Present: Women at Work*, Ramapo College, Ramapo, NY  
*Borders*, Staycation Museum, Berlin, Germany  
2012 *Reviving the Light*, New Zsolnay Eosin Ceramics, Iliad Gallery, New York, NY  
*Collection Gottfried Hafemann*, Kunsthalle, Wiesbaden, Germany  
*Mortal Stillness*, Moss Bureau, New York, NY  
2011 *Paul Clay*, Salon Bowery Gallery, New York, NY  
2009 *Salt Peanuts*, Inman Gallery, Houston, TX  
*Commune*, Black and White Gallery, New York, NY  
*Radiant*, Fordham University Gallery, New York, NY  
*Group Show*, Abrons Art Center, New York, NY  
2008 *The Armory Show*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY  
*New Now*, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI  
*Macht Leder Lust*, German Leather Museum, Offenbach, Germany  
*In Transit*, Moti Hasson Gallery, New York, NY  
2007 *The Armory Show*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY  
2006 *Karyn Lovegrove* Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.  
*The Armory Show*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY  
*The Orchid Thief*, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY  
2005 *112 Mercer Street*, Suite 106 Gallery, New York, NY  
2004 *Flipside*, Artists Space, New York, NY  
2003 *Triennial of Contemporary Art and Design*, Museum of Applied Art and Design, Frankfurt, Germany  
*Corporal Identity*, *Body Language*, Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY

- 2002 *FIT*, Schroeder Romero Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
*Artists to Artists*, Ace Gallery, New York, NY  
*Unexpected Selections: The Martin Margulies collection*, The Art Museum at F.I.U. Miami, FL
- 2001 *Sculpture*, Flip Side Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
*The Grammar of Ornament*, Memphis College of Art, Memphis, TN.
- 2000 *White*, Nikolai Fine Art, New York, NY.  
*The Dog and Pony Show*, The Workspace, New York, NY.  
*Red Square*, Smack Mellon Studios, Brooklyn, NY.
- 1998 *Something to Bump Into*, Kagan Martos Gallery, New York, NY.  
*Elbowroom*, Tredje Spåret, Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1997 *The Pink Wink*, New Image Art, West Hollywood, CA.  
*Material Girls*, Gallery 128, New York, NY.
- 1996 *Gender Fucked*, Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle, WA.  
*Crest Hardware Show*, Brooklyn, NY.  
*Pieces of Eight*, Marymount Manhattan College, New York, NY.  
*Pattern and Relief*, Smack Mellon Studios, Brooklyn, NY.
- 1995 *Revealing Desire*, Cristinerose Gallery, New York, NY.  
*Wheel of Fortune*, Lombard-Freid Gallery, New York, NY.
- 1994 *Rough Cuts*, the expanded artist's notebook, Henry Street Settlement, New York, NY.
- 1993 *Crosscurrents of Influence*, Brattleboro Museum, Brattleboro, VT.  
*Coming to Power*, David Zwirner Gallery, New York, NY.  
*Object Lessons*, The Police Building, New York, NY.
- 1992 *On Paper*, Sculpture Center, New York, NY.  
*Queer*, Minor Injury Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.  
*Six East Coast Sculptors* (Curated by Barbara Zucker) Colburn Gallery, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT.  
*Outrageous Desire*, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.  
*Intimacy*, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark, NJ.
- 1990 *Material Obsession*, Soho Center for Visual Artists. New York, NY.  
*Short Stories*, Epoche Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.
- 1989 *Vulgar Realism*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.  
*No Relief*, Ridge Street Gallery, New York, NY.
- 1988 *Sculpture 1988*, White Columns Gallery, New York, NY.  
*Annual Small Works Show*, Sculpture Center, New York, NY.
- 1987 *Small Wonders*, Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, TX.  
*Introductions*, Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas, TX.

## FELLOWSHIPS/GRANTS

- 2013 Fulbright Scholar, Pecs, Hungary
- 2010 The Trust for Mutual Understanding, travel grant to Hungary
- 2008 Art Omi, artist residency, Ghent, NY  
 Watershed, Kiln god fellowship, Newcastle, ME  
 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant
- 2007 The John Michael Kohler Arts/Industry artist residency, Sheboygan, WI
- 2006 The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH
- 2004 The Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement ,Artist studio residency New York, NY
- 2001 Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation studio and grant. New York, NY
- 2000 Residency, Wiesbaden, Germany
- 1999 Artslink Fellowship. Textile project in the Republic of Georgia
- 1996 Vermont Studio Center, Full Fellowship
- 1995 New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Department of State Fellowship  
 Yaddo, (1995, 1991, 1990)
- 1989 Millay Colony for the Arts, Austerlitz, NY
- 1987 Core-Fellowship, Glassell School of the Arts, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. (1985-87)



**SANDRA GERING INC**

14 East 63rd Street

New York | NY

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