

# The Boston Globe

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## Modern riffs on old ideas

No art is simply, blithely contemporary. That would be like saying our parents had no influence on us. Today's art responds to and reacts against yesterday's art. "Covet: Art + Objects," an ambitious show of 40 works at Ferrin Gallery in Pittsfield, is an exhibition of homage. Curators Leslie Ferrin and Sienna Patti invited artists to visit museums, talk to curators, and find inspiration, and then to riff on the works that inspired them.

Ferrin Gallery specializes in three-dimensional work, particularly ceramics, and the clay works in "Covet" stand out. Painters have a tougher time of it, attempting to respond in original ways to artists such as Courbet and Sargent when the discourse about painting has moved so far since they were at work.



The discourse about clay has progressed, too, but the ceramicists here are not, mostly, responding to museum pieces in their own medium. They are taking off from paintings and prints, imbuing familiar two-dimensional styles with volume, texture, and wit.

Giselle Hicks, for instance, borrows from Flemish still life artist Nicolaes van Veerendael's 1662 painting "A Bouquet of Flowers in a Crystal Vase," in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Hicks's breathtaking sculpture "and then it was still" drains all the color from van Veerendael's bouquet, mournfully offering it up in white vitreous china. Blossoms erupt from a vase and spill over a table. The vase and the table have pale blue drawings of the plants traced over their surfaces, as if to remind us that these strewn clay petals have just sprung into three-dimensionality.

An idyllic 18th-century drawing, Isaac de Moucheron's "Landscape With Architecture" (also from the Metropolitan's collection), is the source for Molly Hatch's "Lost Arcadia." Hatch serves up the magisterial landscape on a grid of 30 hand-painted ceramic dinner plates. The grid of circles cleverly breaks up and abstracts the scene, but doesn't abandon its coherence. Indeed, it spotlights the mark-making.

There's much more to see. "Covet" is up all summer, and in July and August, ArtBerkshires ([www.artberkshires.com](http://www.artberkshires.com)) will present museum tours, studio visits, dinners, and more in conjunction with the show.

### Virtue in creative play

Candice Smith Corby and Doug Weathersby have both built forts in Boston galleries, with work that plunges into the nature of play. At Ellen Miller Gallery, Corby's show "Fortified" has at its center "Hiding Den," several chairs covered over with found textiles and a hand-painted sheet.

Visitors are welcome to crawl inside. I did, and sat in the dim light enjoying a particular kind of privacy that only such a dwelling can afford. It's a feeling of being hidden in plain sight that probably goes back to being a 2-year-old, and thinking you cannot be seen when you hold a napkin up in front of your face. "Hiding Den" is most explicitly a metaphor for internal space, a three-dimensional representation of imagination's laboratory, but it also toys with the charged intersection of public and private.