

## Alice Mackler

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A crowd of women, all ceramic, all less than a foot tall, all on plinths of various sizes, faces the entrance to Alice Mackler's latest exhibition. The glazed color and lumpy, ovular form of the sculptures meld into each other, a tactile presence that would be—one imagines—as eventful to touch as to look at. Mackler has crafted each of the figures so that they lean, a posture that enhances the attitudes of surprise, fear, or mirth described in the tiny statues' bulging eyes, open mouths, and smiles. The colors—glossy turquoises and mustard yellows, powder pinks and dusty oranges—are gorgeous, lending a sensuality to the curious, decidedly bold shape that Mackler favors, like Auguste Rodin or Niki de Saint Phalle without massiveness or monumentality, but with a more intense appreciation of texture. Mackler, born in 1931 in New York City, has long been an original artist aware of historical and contemporary achievements in traditional mediums, which she has recoinced and refined as something singularly her own.

All of the ceramics have been made over the past three years. Flanking these are three collages and three drawings made between 2006 and 2009 that bear strong similarities in color and form to the women. Also, there are three paintings from 1968, which make clear that Mackler's imagery and formal inventiveness was well established by the late 1960s. Take *Meditating*, a playful image of a young woman sitting over a stool; it is an expertly and wittily executed painting that is at once formally complex and completely subtle. The young woman has been rendered in profile, her blue eyes peering demurely behind thick, full lashes; red ribbons are laced through her blond coif. Characteristically, nipples are emphasized—one is visible in this painting, a rotund red dot atop her ample chest. Her body is curvaceous, abstracted into a single sinuous shape. She, like the sculptures, is also shown leaning, here into a green-and-blue abyss, her absent-minded stance exalting the delightful depiction that would mark the next four-or-five decades of Mackler's career.



Alice Mackler, *untitled*, 2013, glazed earthenware, 9.5 x 8 x 9".

— David Rhodes