

ALICE GVALET | PATTERN PLAY

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NEW YORK



TWENTY FIRST
COLLECTIBLE DESIGN OF THE CENTURY



This October, Twenty First Gallery is proud to present the first U.S. solo exhibition of French ceramic artist, Alice Gavalet. Featuring seventeen new and recent works, the show marks a significant moment in her career, introducing her bold, playful creations to American audiences and unveiling two particularly exciting new departures—a cabinet and coffee table, which are among the first furniture pieces of their kind in her œuvre. They also represent the first time she has combined ceramic with other materials.

Gavalet's work has been featured in AD, Wallpaper* and The Financial Times, and acquired by leading interior designers, such as Jacques Grange, Pierre Yovanovitch and India Mahdavi. Her creations have also entered the collections of the Mobilier National in Paris and the Fondation Villa Datri in Provence, and been exhibited at the Cheongju Craft Biennale in South Korea.

Describing her style as “joyful,” “instinctive” and “naïve,” Gavalet counts among her inspirations the late American ceramicist Betty Woodman, Italian design icon Ettore Sottsass, and French designer Elisabeth Garouste, with whom she trained at the beginning of her career. “I particularly like her approach,” says Gavalet. “We both share the notion that making objects should be fun.”

Since founding her studio in 2010, Gavalet has injected a light-hearted spirit into her designs and forged a clearly recognizable aesthetic. There is a deliberate simplicity to her sculptural forms, which are developed using sketches and paper cut-outs, and created using slab and coil techniques. She likes playing with asymmetry and disproportions, and while little is left to chance, Gavalet embraces the idea that her pieces should appear spontaneous. She also deliberately incorporates imperfections, whether they be irregular shapes, wobbly lines, dribbling glazes or surface bubbles.

Many of her motifs are drawn from the world of textiles, in particular her signature tartan patterns. But, what perhaps most characterizes Gavalet's work is her use of bright color and her extremely painterly approach. Engobes, enamels and oxides are applied with a brush and multiple layers added to create subtle transparencies and highly nuanced hues. Sometimes, the clay is intentionally left visible, creating an intriguing sense of depth. As a result, there is not only great complexity to her creations, but also a wonderful vitality and movement. And while they may all nominally be functional objects, Gavalet prefers to consider them as “painted sculptures.”

Among the body of work on show at Twenty First are a striking set of vases, a series of eye-catching table lamps, two pairs of sconces, several occasional tables, and the coffee table and cabinet. The former combines ceramic and brass, while the latter also features elements made from waxed oak. They are presented in a scenography conceived by Jean de Piépape, consisting of a light, playful and visually engaging setup that perfectly highlights the diverse possibilities for presenting each work of art.

“I find tartan to be a complex abstract art form with a strong mathematical undertone. It feels less like the sum of its parts and more like a unified aesthetic, yet every time I look at it, I discover something new—an endless variation. For this show with Alice, we ventured into larger pieces for the first time. It was quite challenging in terms of the making, but I was intrigued by the potential outcome—and in the end, both pieces turned out stronger than ever.”

- Renaud Vuillat, Founder & Director, Twenty First

ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (BLUE ROUND LAMP), 2024

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 11.8 x D 9.4 in.

(H 30 x D 25 cm)



One of the adjectives Gavalet uses to describe her work is “classical.” “My goal is not to revolutionize ceramics,” she says, and there is something redolent of the Art Deco period in this lamp with its spherical base and simple paper shade. Three small feet lift it off the ground, endowing it with added grace and lightness. Its uniqueness resides in its décor, which displays the artist’s love of tartan motifs and features dynamic dribbles. It’s something that could not be replicated, due to the fact that she used enamels that were left at the bottom of pots. “The colors are no longer pure as they’ve been mixed with others left on brushes,” she says. “As a result, they give an extraordinary density.”



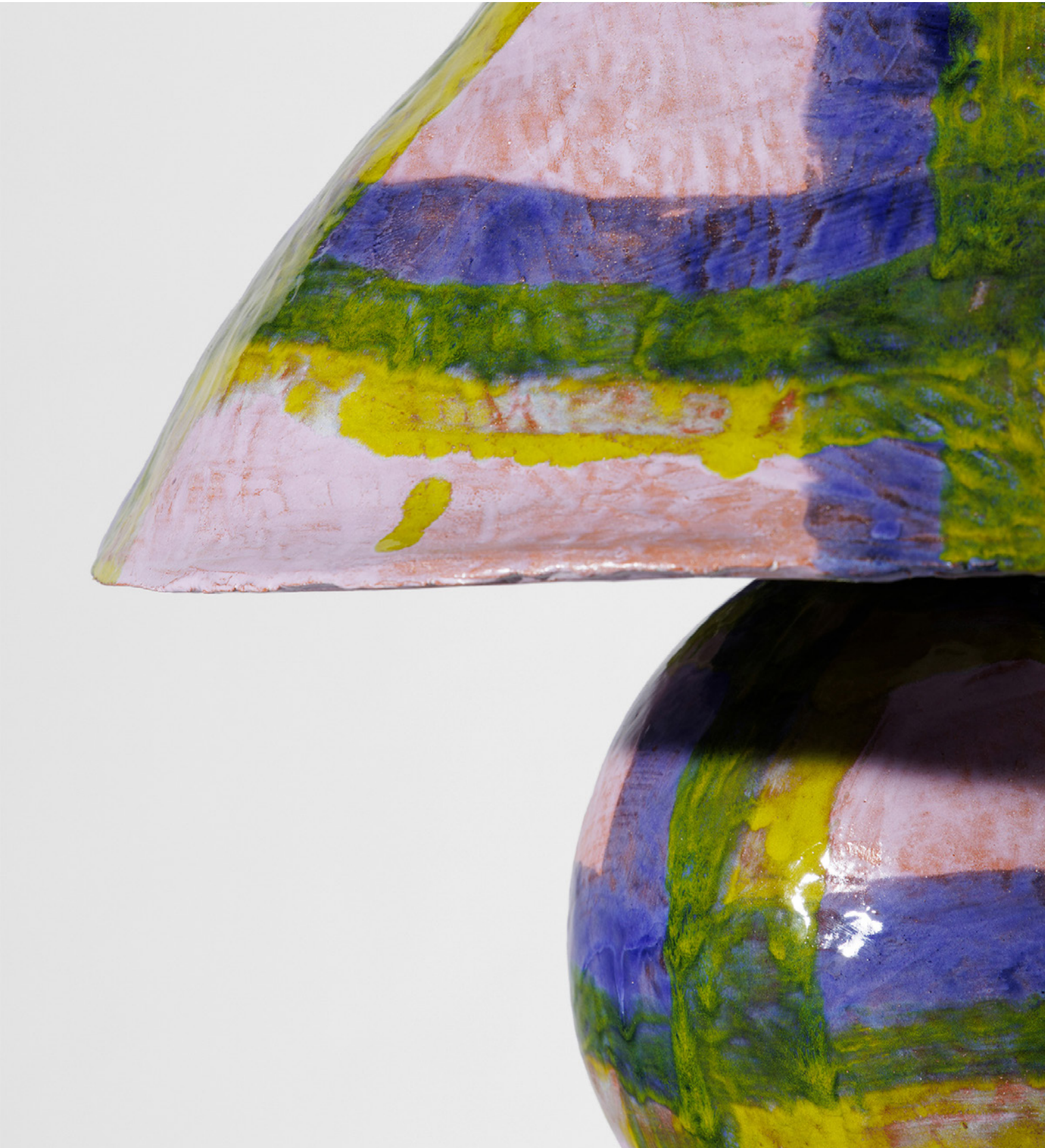
ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PINK TARTAN LAMP), 2024

Glazed Ceramic
Signed
H 19.6 x D 17.7 in.
(H 50 x D 45 cm)



A light fixture that embodies the artist’s constant celebration of imperfection in the firm belief that glitches and defects create tension and personality. Fingerprints are visible, dribbles and drops are clearly conspicuous, and the shade is slightly crooked. The palette is particularly vibrant and acidic, with a very clear desire for the hues to overlap in order to create other shades. A lime tone applied on top of a purple, for instance, gives a darker, forest green.

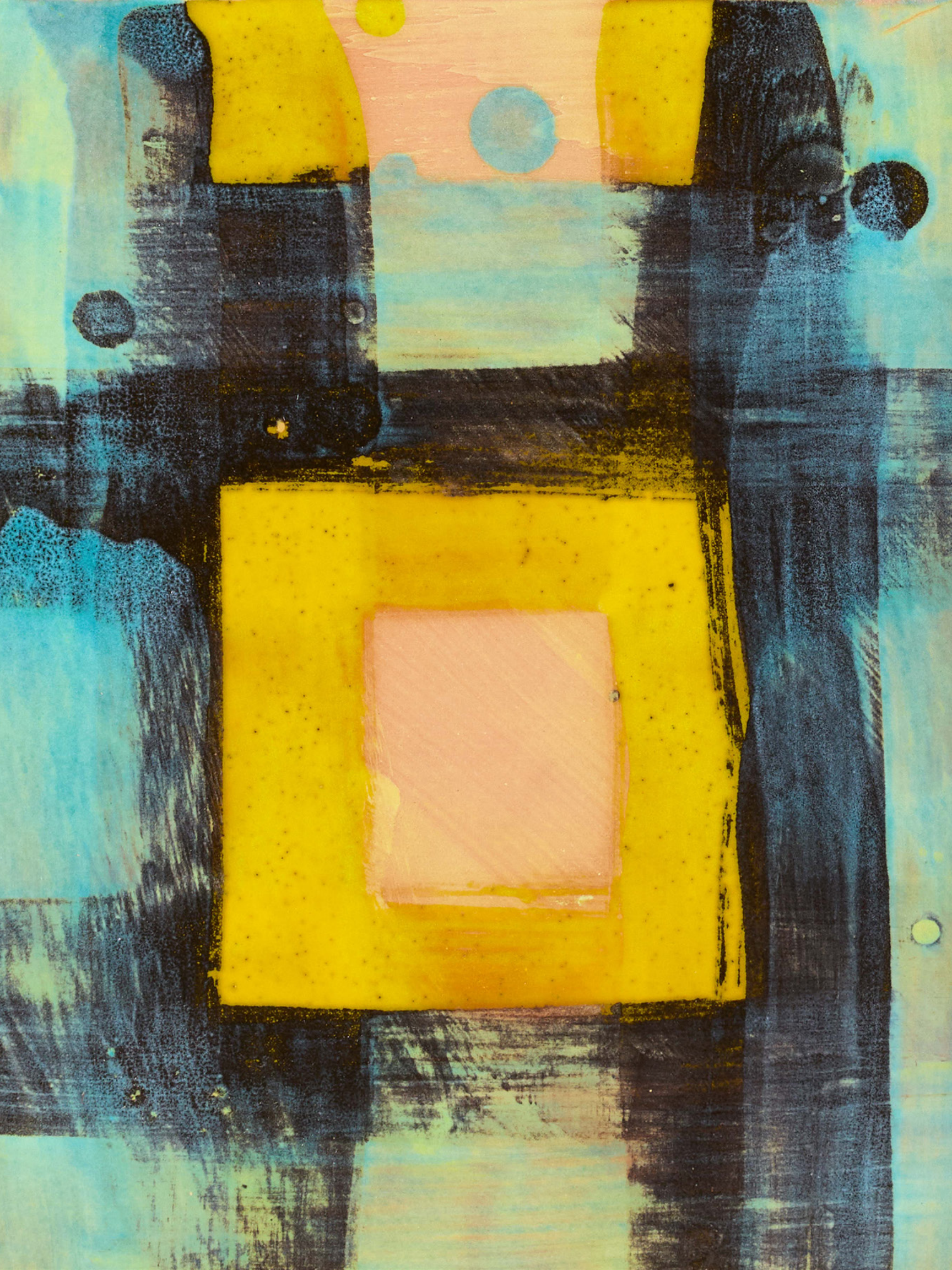


ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (BLUE & YELLOW CERAMIC CABINET), 2025

Glazed Ceramic, Waxed Oak, Brass
Signed
H 68.5 x W 34.6 x D 15.7 in
(H 174 x W 88 x D 40 cm)





An exciting new departure in the artist's work is the creation of larger-scale items of furniture. This ceramic, brass and wooden cabinet is a particularly striking example. Its façade is made up of eight ceramic plaques, which are completely independent. The tartan motif on each is offset, creating a syncopated effect and causing the pattern to pulsate. It is framed by a strong, bold line, which is obtained by a superposition of different hues, rather than the simple application of a black glaze, thus offering a greater variation of tones. The handles, meanwhile, are in the same waxed-oak that lines the interior. "It's as if the inside were projected outwards," notes Gavalet. "It's the kind of detail I really love."



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PINK & BLUE LAMP), 2024

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 29.5 x D 15.7 in.

(H 75 x D 40 cm)



A piece that is very much about texture and color. The base is in one of the archetypal, simple forms that Gavalet favors, but it's all about how both the materials catch the light. The woven raffia of the shade seems to vibrate, while the subtle pink and turquoise stripes appear almost to bubble. The effect is created by a superposition of enamel, copper oxide and a final layer of white. "I like the fact that it makes the motif less clear and visible," says Gavalet.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (BLUE RIBBON VASE), 2024

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 19.6 x D 7.9 in.

(H 50 x D 20 cm)



Alice Gavalet likes basing her creations on simple forms, as witnessed by the body of this wonderfully sculptural vase. Complexity is added by the sinuous ribbon, whose shape was developed using a paper cut-out, wrapping itself around like an embrace to add not only a decorative flourish, but also a pair of functional handles. The two tones of blue are both subtly variegated. Engobes were overlaid on the handle, while the pinkish tones of the earthenware were left deliberately visible on the body.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PINK & BLUE CERAMIC COFFEE TABLE), 2025

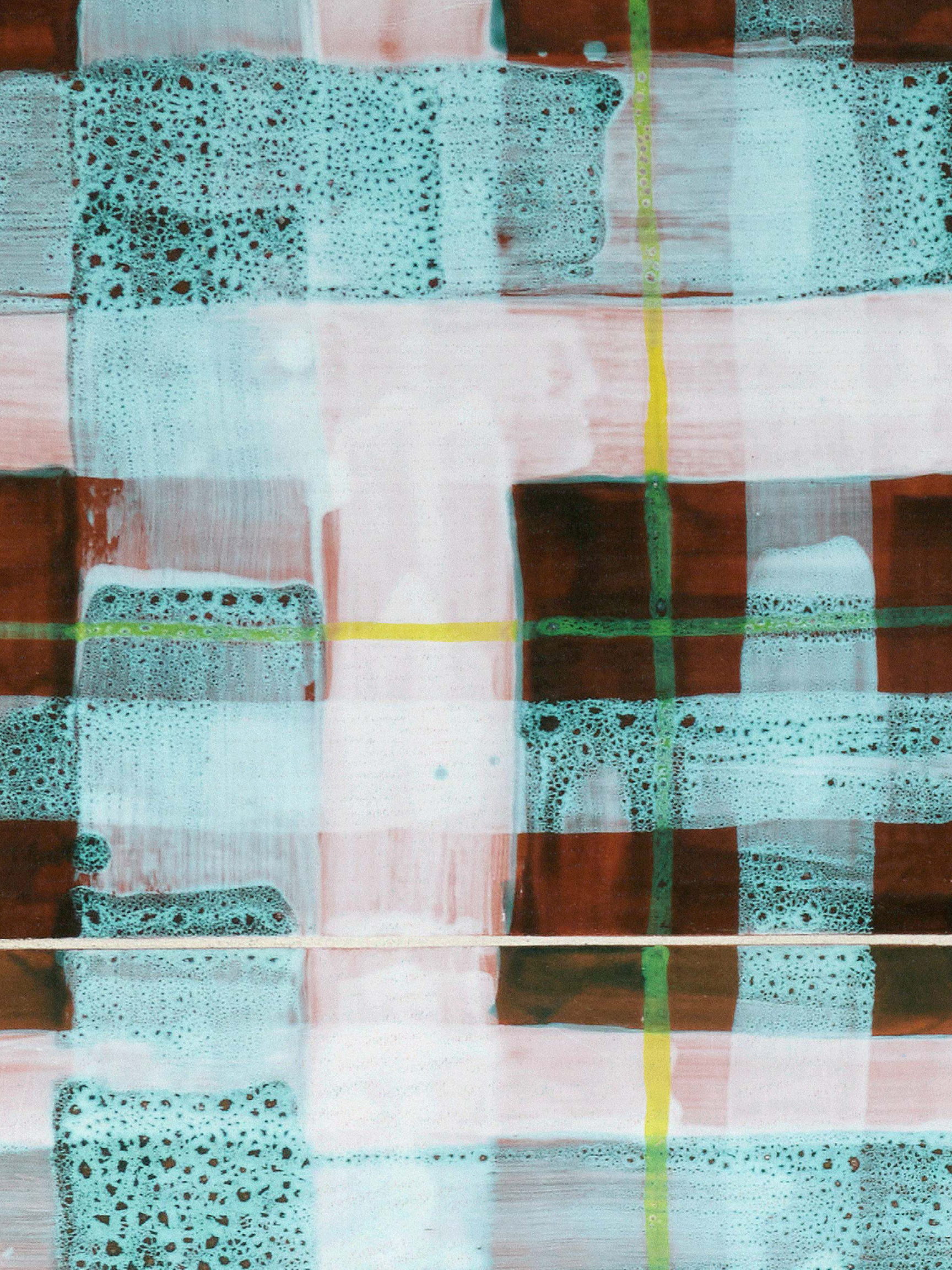
Glazed Ceramic

Signed

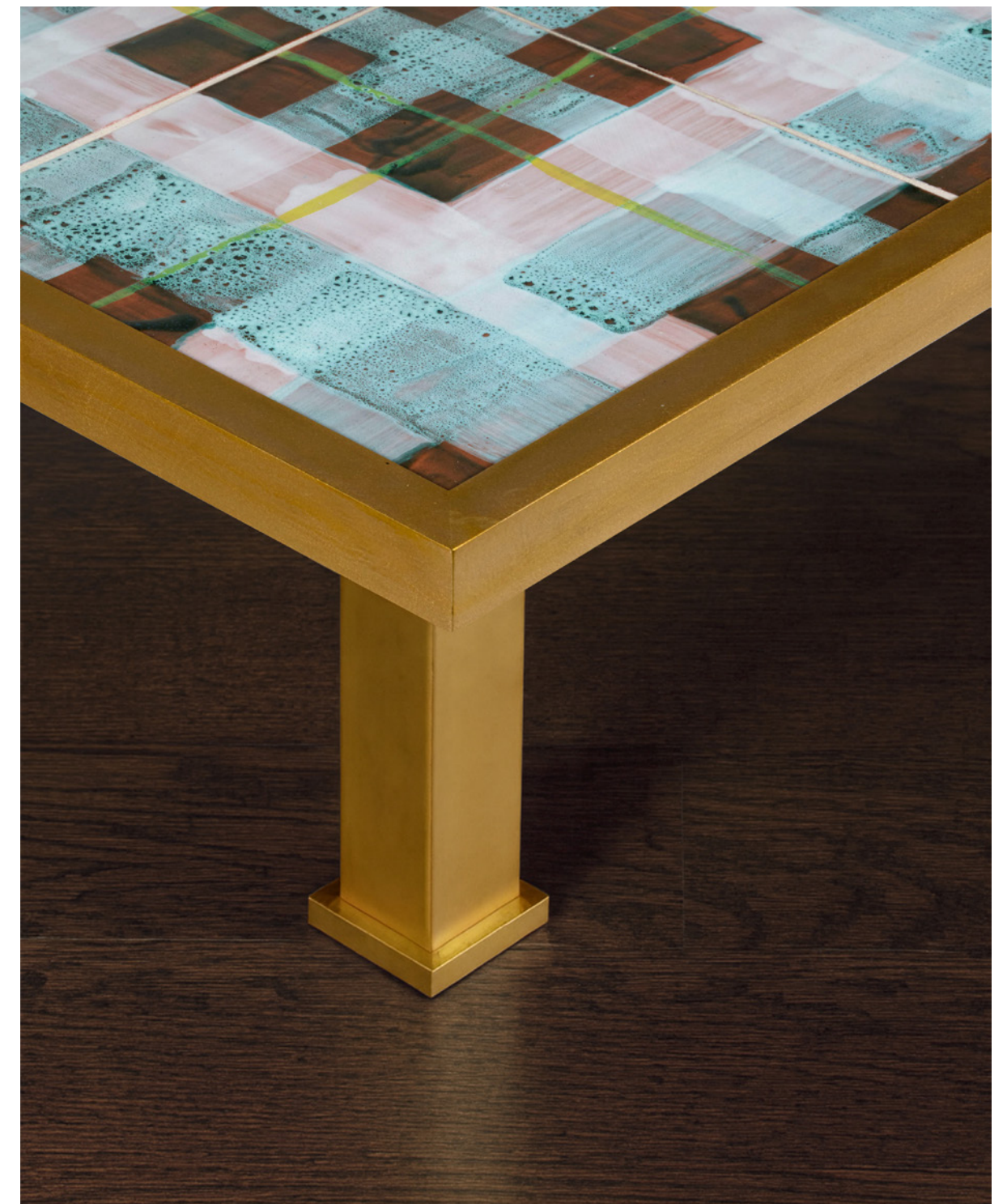
H 54.3 x W 41.3 x D 15.7 in.

(H 138 x W 105 x D 40 cm)





Another seminal piece in the exhibition, this is one of the first coffee tables created by the artist. In contrast with the cabinet, the pattern on the different ceramic plaques that form the top are aligned and continuous. They were placed side-by-side during the enamelling process and treated as a whole. For Gavalet, the effect is like that of a tablecloth. They are set in a simple frame of brass, whose gilded tones offset the hues of the glazes, with the legs standing on beautifully proportioned square feet.



ALICE GVALET
UNTITLED (FLOWER LAMP I), 2024

Glazed Ceramic
Signed
H 25.6 x D 11.8 in.
(H 65 x D 30 cm)

The graceful, slender form of this lamp base has been decorated with a motif that marks a new direction in the artist’s work. “Up until now, I’ve not drawn much inspiration from the natural world, but it’s a theme I’d like to explore,” she says. Naïve leaf-like shapes almost interlock, creating a striking graphic effect. Their lines have been hollowed out in the clay and painted in relief, creating contrast and adding depth to the overall design.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (FLOWER LAMP II), 2024

Glazed Ceramic
Signed
H 25.6 x D 9.8 in.
(H 65 x D 25 cm)

Another example of the artist’s love of elementary forms. The conic base was created by folding a slab of clay, almost as if it were a leaf of paper. The final form is slightly irregular and asymmetrical, and purposely so. Against a deep blue background, bold petal motifs are painted in white in a charming, almost childlike fashion, with brushstrokes, dribbles and splotches celebrated for the delightful spontaneity they bring.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PAIR OF GREEN TARTAN GUERIDONS), 2025

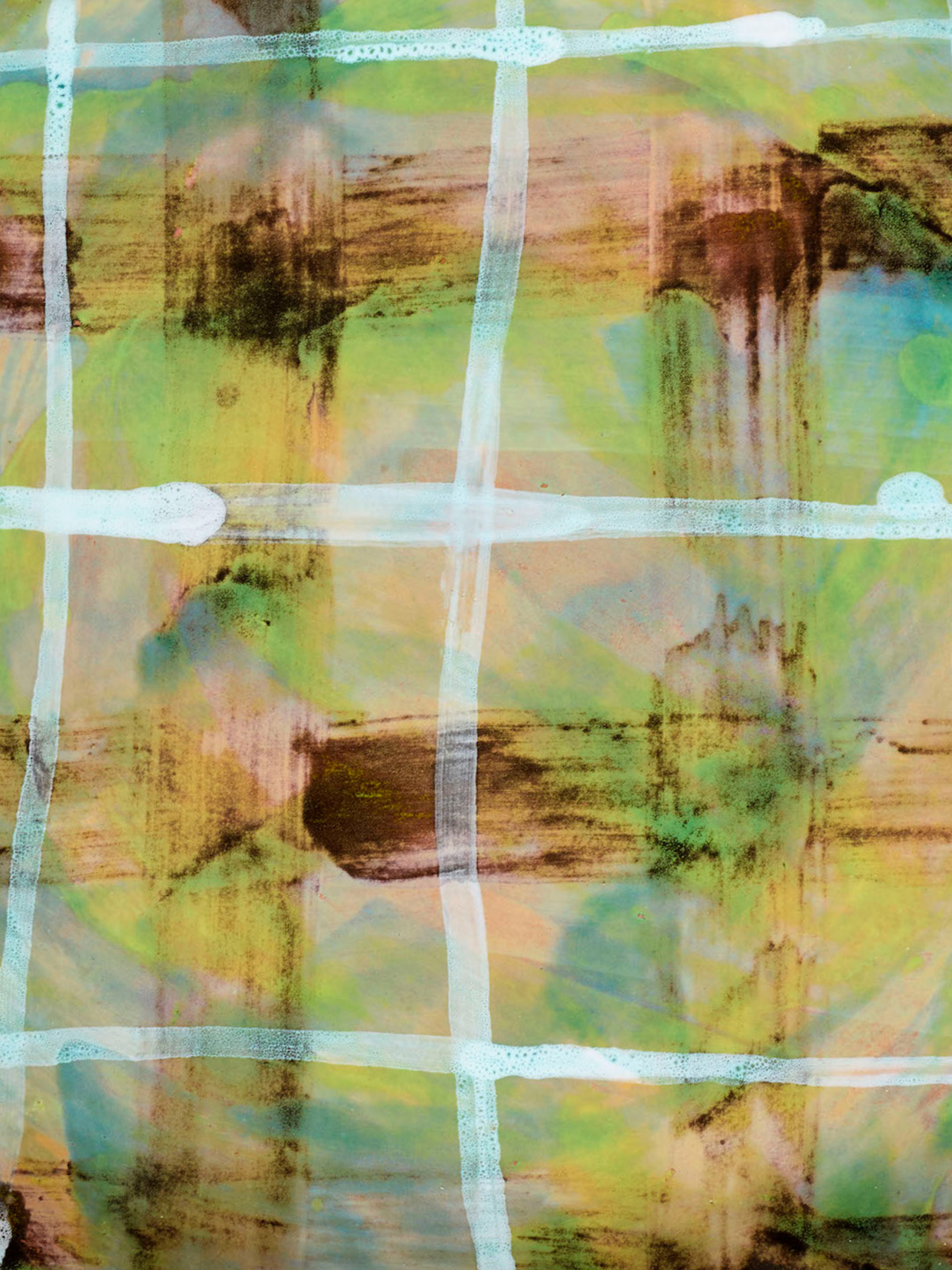
Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 21.6 x W 17.3 in.

(H 55 x D 44 cm)





The artisanal nature of this pair of tables is quite clear. Each is assembled by hand, making them individual and unique. The palette, meanwhile, is softer and gentler than much of the artist's work, allowing for the transparencies created by her technique of superposing engobes and glazes to particularly come into play. Hues overlap in an irregular fashion, with the underlayers at times concealed and at others popping up on the surface. Dribbles and wobbles are not only accepted as part of the process, but actually coveted. They provide character, complexity and a distinctly hand-made quality.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (YELLOW TARTAN LAMPS), 2023

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 15.8 - 22.1 x W 6.3 - 10.6

(H 40 - 56 x W 16 - 27 cm)

The inspiration for this trio of lamps was rooms entirely clad in wallpaper. The same overall effect is created by using the same motif on the base as the shade, with the lines of the pattern slightly offset to create a touch of visual tension. Typical of the artist's work, they purposefully display irregular forms and imperfect glazes, while the presence of white provides a particularly luminous effect. The ceramic shades are mounted on bespoke metallic frames, and while each lamp is perfectly functional, the artist regards them more as everyday sculptures.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PAIR OF PINK & BLUE SCONCES), 2024

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 18.1 x W 11.8 x D 4.7 in.

(H 46 x W 30 x D 12 cm)



Made from black clay, these fixtures are almost like vases mounted on the wall. They are assembled from flat slabs, which are cut out and joined together in a fashion that ensures they are not completely identical. They even have a slightly different depth. “I like it when things are a bit off,” notes the artist, who was keen to explore the effect of very contrasting colors. To differentiate them further, she also juxtaposed different finishes, the turquoise being shiny, while the pink is muted and matte.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (PAIR OF YELLOW & BLUE SCONCES), 2024

Glazed Ceramic
Signed
H 17.3 x W 13.6 x D 4.7 in.
(H 44 x W 35 x D 12 cm)



A perfect demonstration of the artist's pictorial approach to glazes and decoration. There is a vibrancy to the expressive way in which the colors are applied. The brushstrokes are almost dramatic, bubbles appear on the surface and the turquoise at time overlaps the yellow. Once again, the glossy finish of the former interplays with the matte aspect of the latter. There is also a strong dialogue between the wavy lines and curvaceous wings, which call to mind fringes on a garment.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (GUERIDON II), 2023

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 21.7 x W 17.3 x D 17.3 in.

(H 55 x W 44 x D 44 cm)

Gavalet has been creating small side tables, or gueridons, for the past decade, using forms that evoke for her pawns on a chessboard. The reference to the world of games is heightened in this example by the checker-like evocation of the tartan motif and the lip on the tabletop. Its hues are highly gradated and its lines hesitant and wavering. “I like endowing my creations with a sense of motion and instability,” she says. The pattern itself is continuous between the base and the top, as if the whole had been plunged in a bath of color.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (RED & BLACK VASE), 2015

Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 20.9 x W 13.2 x D 4.5 in.

(H 53 x W 33.5 x D 11.5 cm)

Created a decade ago, this piece is one of artist's early vases, with a décor inspired by Art Brut. For her, its circular motif is also a nod to the work of Yayoi Kusama, which is dominated by dots. The vase's form is a clear illustration of the Gavalet's technique of assembling forms cut from clay slabs. Each of the black rings is deliberately different and irregular, endowing the design with rhythmic movement. The red tones are created using engobes rather than glazes, while the addition of tenuous touches of blue adds further depth. The design is also continued on the inside of the vase—a recurrent practice in her oeuvre.



ALICE GVALET

UNTITLED (GREEN VASE), 2015

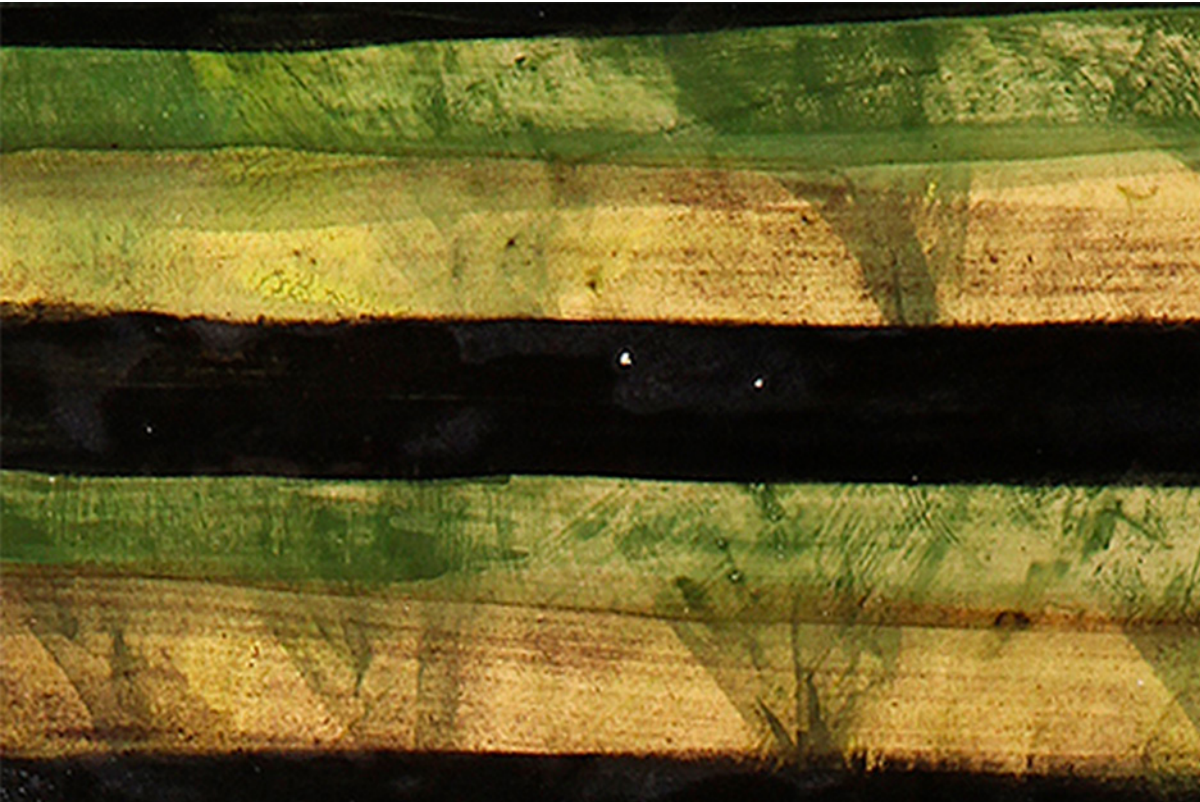
Glazed Ceramic

Signed

H 23 x W 13 x D 5.5 in.

(H 59 x W 33 x D 14 cm)

One of Gavalet’s early creations, this vase is particularly striking for its uneven, finely balanced shape, which endows it with both a craft-like quality and a sweeping dynamism. “It clearly translates my method of working with paper cut-outs. It’s almost like a simple 3D model,” she says. The palette is softer, more subdued, and the patterns distinctly geometric, their inspiration derived from a book documenting bold, symbolic wall paintings made by women in remote West African villages.



ALICE GVALET

After studying at ENSAAMA Olivier de Serres and the Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Alice Gavalet began her career working for major fashion and interior design brands, and with designer Elizabeth Garouste.

In 2010, she decided to refocus on her personal creation and set up her own studio in Nogent-sur-Marne, filled with felt-tip sketches and lined with boxes, vases, mirrors, lamps and other unique original pieces.

Her creative process begins with drawing, a daily discipline that enables her to formalize her thoughts and bring her new pieces to life. She then assembles different materials – ceramics, metal, wood, fabric – and geometric shapes, combining them with bright colors to create objects that are witty, strong and honest.

To Gavalet, ceramics is a game. The playful aspect of her work can be seen at every stage of creation, which must be joyful and instinctive. Her innate sense of color and pattern is enhanced by her work in engobe, which she favors for its matte appearance, and by her spontaneous technique, using slabs and colombin.

Her sources of influence range from textiles to art brut and the decorative arts, from Betty Woodman and Ettore Sottsass to Max Ernst, Jean Dubuffet and Paul Cox. Her pieces are strong but unprovocative, imposing themselves naturally.

It's this signature that attracts attention in France and abroad, where she exhibits extensively in galleries, art centers and Parisian and international fairs. She exhibited her work at Paris Design Week 2020 and has been featured in Architectural Digest, the Financial Times and Wallpaper Magazine.



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