

# COLOSSAL

Rebecca Manson: "Thousands of Porcelain Pieces Undulate Across Rebecca Manson's Elegantly Draped Wings"

By Grace Ebert

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Detail of "Grafted Wing" (2023), porcelain, glaze, pigment, adhesive, canvas, hardware, dye, thread, 223 x 218 x 10 centimeters. All images © Rebecca Manson, shared with permission.

"I've always been captivated by the fluidity of ceramics," says Rebecca Manson. Invoking metamorphosis in material and subject matter, the artist fashions large-scale wings and bodies that gracefully drape from gallery walls with eyespots and other patterns cloaking the forms.

Scaling upwards of seven feet, Manson's sculptures comprise thousands of individual components that the artist and her team of assistants refer to as "smushes," small bits of clay they flatten in their hands. The pieces are tedious to make, although the process can be meditative when there's a rhythm that builds, particularly when constructing enormous numbers like the 200,000 required for her upcoming solo show at Josh Lilley in London.

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"Grafted Wing" (2023), porcelain, glaze, pigment, adhesive, canvas, hardware, dye, thread, 223 x 218 x 10 centimeters

A combination of memories found objects and images, emotions, and formal inquiries permeate Manson's sculptures, and she likens her process to translation: an initial sketch comprising drawings, glaze tests, and digital mockups leads to a silhouette traced onto the canvas at a much larger scale. She then works on the "smushes," which are bisque-fired according to size and clay type. Manson explains the process:

Then, they are all tediously glazed. They often serve as tiny little test tiles, allowing us to explore infinite glaze interactions and application results. Some are dunked by the handful, then loaded into the kiln one by one. Others are sprayed, hand painted, etc. Variety is the name of the game when it comes to developing a rich palette. And the ability to work in cycles—each cycle is a response to the prior.

Porcelain pieces in lavender, crimson, and beige emerge from the artist's studio before being attached to the wings in dense, feather-like clusters, animating the otherwise rigid material.

A few of the works that will be on view at Josh Lilley in March were created during a residency with The Arctic Circle, which brought Manson in close contact with the rapid decline of the frozen landscape. "My life will never be the same after that," she tells Colossal. "Making this work has been therapeutic. Look at the harshness of nature, whose one goal is to survive, and the burden of grief begins to lift. Death does not always imply sadness, and change, whether natural or not, is inevitable. It's important to try and shift away from a human-centric ego from time to time."

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In addition to the show in London, Manson will also have a solo exhibition in May at The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Until then, visit her Instagram for more.



"Xanthoria Wing"

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Detail of "Xanthoria Wing"



"CRISPR wing" (2023), porcelain, glaze, pigment, adhesives, canvas, hardware, dye, paint, 193 x 228 x 10 centimeters

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Detail of "CRISPR wing" (2023), porcelain, glaze, pigment, adhesives, canvas, hardware, dye, paint, 193 x 228 x 10 centimeters



"Pelt of a Giant Hawk Moth" (2022), porcelain, canvas, glaze, adhesives, 233 x 173 x 8 centimeters

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