

GAGOSIAN

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Rachel Feinstein's Latest Work Is A Dream Come True

In November 2000, sculptor Rachel Feinstein began a journey that changed her art—and her life

Shax Riegler



Rachel Feinstein in Nymphenburg with the piece called Ottavio after it emerged from its first firing in the kiln.

Like a character in a fairy tale, during a 2000 trip artist Rachel Feinstein fell under the spell of Bavaria's picturesque towns, sublime landscapes, fantastical castles, and rococo churches. Further enchantment ensued in Munich at Nymphenburg, the legendary porcelain factory on the grounds of the royal family's once-upon-a-time summer palace. There she succumbed to her own *maladie de porcelaine*, the fabled "porcelain sickness" that possessed so many aesthetes in the 18th century.

Feinstein, whose work has included architectural stage flats, period room-inspired installations, and immersive environments, found herself drawn to the exuberant figurines modeled by Franz Anton Bustelli in the 1750s. But rather than the graceful, colorful characters themselves, the swelling, curvaceous pedestals upon which they stood were what moved her.



The artist working at Nymphenburg.



She shapes a pair of shoes alongside one of Franz Anton Bustelli's commedia dell' arte figures, which inspired the project.



Ottavio, glazed and awaiting shipment to the Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles, where it's on view through February 17.

“What’s so fabulous is how one curve gives into another,” notes Feinstein, who envisioned replicating Bustelli’s organic forms at life size. “They practically killed me, because every time I

would get something perfect from one side, I'd go to the other side and find it didn't look right and have to fix the whole thing. I became obsessed with getting it perfect."

So much so that she had her first attempts—fabricated in foam for a 2014 fashion portfolio in Garage, the biannual art-and-fashion magazine—destroyed. "The big question for me was, How can they really be like ceramic?"

The problem of fabrication continued to haunt Feinstein until one day this past July, while working in her Maine studio, she suddenly thought, Why can't I just do them the way Nymphenburg does? and shot off a note to the factory's general email address. Even though Nymphenburg has a record of collaborating with contemporary artists, she was still surprised when a response came that same night. "I nearly fell off my seat," she recalls. By summer's end she had shipped her models to Germany, and she made her first working trip in September.

Crafting and firing such large-scale ceramic pieces presents many technical issues. Feinstein credits Ingrid Harding, a Kentucky native who now heads the production department at Nymphenburg, for committing to the vision. While four of these pieces will be on view this month at Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles, Feinstein has big plans for further work, including a piece that will measure some 12 by 15 feet: "As long as Ingrid is into it, I have tons of crazy ideas."