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The brilliance of Barnaby Barford



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Kirsty Bertarelli gets her rocks off

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STYLE IS LIVE ON FACEBOOK — LET'S BE FRIENDS. FOLLOW THE STYLE TEAM ON TWITTER AT @THESTYLE

KIRSTY BERTARELLI PHOTOGRAPH: ALICE HAWKINS. STYLING: SAM WILLOUGHBY. TOP BY TOM FORD. LEATHER TROUSERS BY HELMUT LANG. SHOES BY CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN. HAT BY CHRISTY'S. RING BY YUNUS & ELIZA. MEN'S SHOOT PHOTOGRAPHS: TIMUR CELIKDAG. STYLING: JULIAN GANIG. SUSIE BUBBLE ART - COMMERCE

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HAIR: TRACY CAHOON FOR VIVA SOHO USING BUMBLE AND BUMBLE. MAKE-UP: JESSICA MEJIA AT JESSICAMEJIA.COM USING LAURA MERCIER. SHIRT, £363, JACKET, £1,253, AND TROUSERS, £605, BY JIL SANDER. LEOTARD, £25, FROM AMERICAN APPAREL. DRESS, £620, BY DRIES VAN NOTEN, FROM HARVEY NICHOLS. TIGHTS, £12, BY BLOCH



# PORCELAIN PROVOCA

BARNABY BARFORD TAKES YOUR GRANNY'S KITSCH FIGURINES AND TURNS THEM INTO  
BECKY SUNSHINE TALKS TO HIM ABOUT CERAMICS,

I have a love-hate relationship with ceramics," says the London-based artist Barnaby Barford, 35. "It feels like it found me and won't leave me alone." Since his graduation from the Royal College of Art in 2002, Barford has been mostly slicing up mass-produced porcelain figurines, piecing them back together and painting them to create little sculptural scenarios.

It's his clever, satirical titles that get much of the attention. Oh, I Thought It'd Be Bigger or Well, I Think He's Done a Cracking Job have raised wry smiles from viewers, but it was the It's OK, He's Rich piece — figurines of a beautiful lady being wooed by a gentleman with a monkey's head — that grabbed the attention of the gallerist David Gill, who signed him up in 2005. "Barnaby's not just a sculptor, not just an artist — his titles are not coincidental," says Gill. "He is totally original and witty, which is why I knew I wanted to work with him."

It's also what's made Barford a hot ticket for art collectors. The titles, he says, are there to tell the story. "People might otherwise not perceive them as an original object. The title forces you to look at it in a new context, and that's really important to me."

SAM HOLDEN AGENCY

So what's with the obsessions with ceramics? Having discovered the material while on an Italian exchange during his BA, Barford has worked with little else. "My reasons for liking it have definitely changed over the

years," he says. "In the beginning I liked the process of casting it: I could make any shape I wanted to and make multiples of anything. What interests me now is that I see other possibilities.

"I do believe ceramics is still a relatively unexplored material. We're all very comfortable with it: we eat off it, drink out of it, go to the loo on it, but it's not a material we expect to find challenging. Its durability excites me: the colours remain the same, the form doesn't change. I really like playing with those preconceptions — it's just clay, after all."

With concept and narrative his forte, Barford is often compared to the 18th-century English satirist and artist Hogarth — something he's entirely comfortable with. It's the Britishness, the humour, Hogarth's sardonic undertone that raises uncomfortable laughs at the expense of the characters in his work that does it. Barford's pieces cover similar ground set in a modern context: society, politics, consumerism, love gone bad, the banality of daily life. Filtered through his brain they become engaging, black and really funny.

"People think I can be a bit pessimistic about our society, but I don't think I am," he says. "I think about dark things, and it's just the way it comes out. I like the satirical twist on quite a serious subject, because humour disarms people. The thing about Hogarth, Dickens, Chaucer and the like was that they spoke about society and personality in a way that we can still relate to.





# TEUR

SOMETHING SINISTER.

SATIRE AND THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

That's the thing — we don't really change. We live in a more developed society because of technology, but our emotions, our reactions, are the same. We can look at Hogarth's work and see ourselves."

It's precisely this kind of thinking that has led Barford to his current work, a set of full-length sculptural mirrors heavily embellished with handmade porcelain leaves and flowers, based on the seven deadly sins. Pride, for example, is portrayed as a narrow, arched mirror surrounded by intense clusters of gold flowers. Lust, on the other hand, is a splodge-like form and features images of porn stars in the throes of passion. Sloth, a passive white blob, seemingly doesn't care, doesn't love and won't engage. "The only reason it's alive, as it were, is there's nothing it would die for. It's blank," says the artist.

Later this year Barford is planning to make a large-scale tower of Babel with porcelain leaves: "A monument to that great British pastime of shopping, and how our society and our economy are built on consumerism, and how shallow it all is." Ironic really, seeing as artist, gallerist and collector should all benefit nicely from it. Clever, Barnaby. ♦

*Barnaby Barford: The Seven Deadly Sins is at David Gill Gallery, London SW1, until April 12.*  
[davidgillgalleries.com](http://davidgillgalleries.com); [barnabybarford.co.uk](http://barnabybarford.co.uk)



Above: Lust (2013).  
 Left: Mary Had a Little Lamb (2007). Below: Lust (detail).  
 Below left: Barnaby Barford

