



LEFT THE TWO-INCH COMMENTARY PLATES THAT ACCOMPANY SUPERIOR'S 2010 OBAMA WHITE HOUSE PRESENT SOME OF THE MISSIONS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION.

OPPOSITE ABOVE A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF CHINESE PORCELAIN, A COLLECTION: THE CELADONS PLATTER, 2016, PAYS HOMAGE TO TRADITIONAL JADE-GREEN CERAMICS. THE KEY IS TO THE RIGHT.

OPPOSITE BELOW SUPERIOR'S COMPLEX 2009 SMART PLANET: HOMAGE TO SCIENCE IS HER EFFORT TO HIGHLIGHT THE PROBLEMS ENDEMIC TO CLIMATE CHANGE, AND HAS MOTHER EARTH CROWNING THE GLOBE.

# MARA SUPERIOR



Ceramicist Mara Superior has built a career working with porcelain, a traditionally formal material that she presents in a casual and witty way. After receiving a BFA in painting in 1975 from the University of Connecticut, in Storrs, she started experimenting painting directly onto porcelain, and became inspired by working three-dimensionally. Superior has mastered her craft, while working on her own with limited access to materials and resources, to create plates, figurines, tulpières, and larger sculptural works. Her process is a meticulous one. She starts with creating the basic form of the piece, then low-fires it. She then pencil sketches the design, applies an underglaze paint, followed by a clear glaze and finishes by firing them at 2,300°F. The elaborate process establishes the porcelain as a canvas for her paintings. Initially, Superior worked in more fantastical themes depicting flowers, animals, food, and folkloric creatures like mermaids. "I never imagined I would bring politics into porcelain, but after eight years of the Bush administration and the financial collapse, it just channeled through me," she said. Now her works address topics such as climate change and food sustainability. In 1995, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton created the White House Collection of American Crafts with a show that included Superior's *Hot Cocoa*—an enlarged reinterpretation of the classic 18th-century European ceramic form for drinking the prized and exotic beverage. —K.K.



THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE, ABOVE Photographs by Joshua McHugh. OPPOSITE, BELOW Photographs by John Polak

**DATES**  
Born and lives: 1953, Williamsburg, Massachusetts

**RECENT EXHIBITIONS**  
2016, *The Faces of Politics: In/Tolerance*, Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, Massachusetts  
2015, *A Porcelain Menagerie*, Clark Gallery, Lincoln, Massachusetts  
2014, *The Bacchanalistas: Passions + Pleasures*, New York Ceramics Fair, New York, New York

**GALLERY**  
Ferrin Contemporary, North Adams, Massachusetts

**PRICES**  
*A Collection: The Celadons*, 2016; Porcelain, celadon glazes, gold leaf, 14 x 1 x 2½ inches; \$4,800  
*Smart Planet: Homage to Science*, 2009; Porcelain, wood, gold leaf, tin pencil sharpener, 20 x 10½ x 10½ inches; \$10,000  
*President Obama's Tea Party*, 2010; Porcelain, wood, gold leaf, bone, ink, 15 x 25 x 7½; \$6,000