

# Destructive Tendencies

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ÉCRASEMENT I – 2013

PORCELAINE, GLAÇURE, PIGMENTS / PORCELAIN, GLAZE, PIGMENTS

14.3 X 38.5 X 22 CM. PRIVATE COLLECTION

PHOTO: DAVID BISHOP NORIEGA

**Artist Laurent Craste uses acts of violence to create delicate ceramic sculptures that pack a powerful message.**

Montreal-based Laurent Craste has defined his ceramic work by destroying what he creates. Craste puts his reproductions of historic vases, busts and other objets d'art through extreme abuses. Those might include trampling, stabbing, defacing with graffiti, beating with a baseball bat or even ramming with a brick. Even so, the pieces remain recognizable as decorative objects. By willfully corrupting these icons, he disrupts our notions about the historical, social and aesthetic value they represent, and creates a new aesthetic in the process. Here is independent curator Pascale Beaudet on Laurent Craste.



PORTRAIT OF LAURENT CRASTE WITH ICONOCRASTE - O  
 PHOTO: DAVID BISHOP NORIEGA

*Laurent Craste explores the notion of power by focusing on the dominant French classes of the 18th and 19th centuries, who commissioned very beautiful objects d'art, including vases from the famous French porcelain manufacturer in Sèvres. The artist is particularly interested in how the elite of that time used economic power and aesthetics as instruments of propaganda. And while his works examine the power the elite exuded over the masses, they are also a commentary on the latter's retaliation. The violent acts that Craste subjects his reproductions to draw reference from peoples' uprisings of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Commune of 1871, during which works of art and buildings, once held by the upper classes, were routinely destroyed.*

*In his vases, we see the objects' delicacy contrasted with the solidity of the tool used to disfigure them. We also see a juxtaposition of eras and methods of fabrication: the hand-crafted objects of the 18th and 19th centuries, with the tools machined in 20th-century factories.*

*To determine the mode of destruction for each piece, Craste develops his works in reverse. Both the clay and the tool must be tested in the kiln. It means conducting numerous experiments—and also suffering many losses. Ultimately, the material composition of the tool determines at which stage of the process it will be integrated into the piece. As to the choice of tool, it's the shape of the decorative object that determines it.*

*Craste says that, given the number of losses, which can account for nearly half of his overall production, his greatest satisfaction is in realizing that one successful piece. Conversely, he feels an intense frustration when the object collapses. It's at that point that the porcelain exercises its power over the artist.*



RÉVOLUTION III – 2016  
PORCELAINE, GLAÇURE, HACHE  
PORCELAIN, GLAZÉ, AXE  
77 X 30 X 43 CM.  
PHOTO: DANIEL ROUSSEL