

# ABATTOIR



***multiples: quotidian, habitual, stereotypical***

October 3<sup>rd</sup> – November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Opening reception with the artist Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6 – 8pm

The artist will deliver a talk in the gallery at the opening reception, at 6:00 pm

Preview the exhibition [here](#).

Abattoir is thrilled to present an installation by Michelle Grabner, well-known artist and teacher based in Chicago and Milwaukee, focusing on her long-held investigations of the ordinary and familiar as signifiers of political society. This is the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery. She was featured with Abattoir at Independent last May, and was the subject of a retrospective exhibition, with catalog, at the Schneider Museum in Oregon. An earlier retrospective exhibition was held at moCa Cleveland in 2013.

With its critical stakes, Michelle Grabner's 35-year studio practice has long been compelled by the philosophical and aesthetic problem of repetition and difference. In Grabner's work, repetition is never absolute. Difference inevitably emerges in the slippages of translating patterns or in the casting of objects. In this exhibition, prints, slip-cast porcelain, and bronze

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sand-castings aspire toward sameness, yet reveal variations, imperfections, and subtle ruptures.

Beginning in the 1980s, artists found new ways of critiquing consumer society and capitalism, foregrounding the act of labor and production in studio practice. Employing an assembly line idea of repetition expressed in serialism, Grabner mines ideas put forth by critic Craig Owens in 1983:

*“The contradiction between difference and repetition is intrinsic to the serial mode of production itself—a mode which proceeds from, but is not identical with, the mass production of commodities. For while mass production, and the social logic of homogenization which it entails work to eliminate difference (standardization), serial production reintroduces a limited gamut of differences into the mass-produced object.”*

The works underscore the limits of standardization, pushing against industrial uniformity: even in the context of factory production at Kohler Company, objects foreground the human trace, pointing to the impossibility of total replication. Material agency is equally evident in the wide variations of surface treatment and medium, as clay bodies and bronze often resist technical control, asserting discrete form and presence. This exhibition proposes a model where value is generated through serious production and the embrace of the differential. Repetition here is never neutral; it can reinforce hierarchies, but also undo them. Grabner’s critique of modernism continues here as well. Her work strains Minimalism’s visual languages of the grid, destabilizing its embrace of pure form and neutrality by infusing it with domesticity, gender, and the “minor.”

*Multiples* highlights new sculptures of painted porcelain and cast metal made at the Kohler Company while in residence over the past few years. In addition to sculptures are new prints produced at Tandem Press in Madison, several large-scale paintings, and a singular wall tapestry woven in Guadalajara, Mexico.

**Michelle Grabner** received her MA in Art History and BFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and an MFA in Art Theory and Practice from Northwestern University. Grabner is currently Senior Chair of the Department of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and was a Core Critic at Yale University in the Department of Painting and Printmaking from 2011 to 2014. In 2021, Grabner was awarded the Fine Arts Guggenheim Fellowship. A regular contributor to *Artforum*, her writing has also appeared in publications including *Art in America*, *Frieze*, *Modern Painters*, and *Art-Agenda*. Grabner co-curated the 2014 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art along with Anthony Elms and Stuart Comer and served as the inaugural artistic director of FRONT International, a triennial exhibition in Cleveland, OH and the vicinity in 2018. She is also the

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founder and co-director of two non-profit art spaces in Wisconsin, The Suburban and The Poor Farm, with her husband, artist Brad Killam.

Grabner has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Hedreen Gallery at Seattle University; INOVA, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Ulrich Museum, Wichita; and University Galleries, Illinois State University. She has been included in major group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Akron Art Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tate St. Ives, UK; and Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland. Her work is included in the permanent collection of museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MO; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, WI; Knoxville Museum of Art, TN; Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE; Daimler Contemporary, Berlin; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Grabner lives and works in Milwaukee.

Image: Michelle Grabner, Untitled (cabbages), 2024 - 2025, slip cast vitreous china, courtesy of the artist.