



"YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE WE ARE MAGIC (BARF BAG)"

2010, **Debra Baxter**

CERAMIC, MIRROR, LAB GROWN BISMUTH (GERMANY)

17" x 24" x 6"

PHOTO: RICHARD NICHOL

COURTESY: OF THE ARTIST AND PLATFORM GALLERY

### SEATTLE

#### **Debra Baxter: "Wanting is Easier Than Having"** at Platform Gallery

Walking into Debra Baxter's show at Platform Gallery is a little like stepping into a natural history museum. But the lessons to be learned have less to do with geologic formations than with the complicated nature of human relationships. Baxter has been addressing human power plays, questions of vulnerability, and masculine and feminine stereotypes for years, using gorgeous (and oftentimes costly) stone materials to poke at the difficulties in forging—and in the case of the current show maintaining—human connections.

The vast majority of these small sculptural installations, made of ceramics, mirrors, borrowed objects and glittering gems, are exhibited scientifically on a long row of shelves that protrude starkly from white walls. The exception: **Untitled (open/end)**—a torso-sized piece of alabaster, cinched at the waist with a leather belt formerly owned by Baxter's grandfather—is placed directly upon the floor. Many of the works on display rely on contrasts in materials (concrete paired with alabaster for example) to underscore complexities inherent to human relationships such as strength and weakness, or safety and vulnerability. In **Lean on Me (Lean-to)** a pool-like blue mirror acts as

the base for a chunk of mustard-colored citrine. Perched precariously atop a thin rod, the glittering stone seems to admire its glittering reflection, while simultaneously serving as makeshift shelter. In **You have to believe we are magic (barf bag)**, a gorgeous array of colored rocks spills from a ceramic sack. Baxter's gems might serve as a symbolic "spilling of guts" or the very real manifestation of a human body in distress. The reality of a relationship rarely fits the fantasy that precedes it (hence Baxter's exhibit title), and all the talking in the world won't necessarily right what's gone wrong. In **She won't shut up**, a tongue crafted of alabaster, amethyst, titanium, quartz, and Moroccan galena, has wagged its way to the very edge of the shelf on which it sits. What begins at the base as a glittering array of multihued stones (amethyst, titanium quartz and galena) ends in a colorless tip of alabaster; forever frozen in an attempt to communicate.

As for Baxter, she's rarely tongue-tied. Her works are often supported with titles that help tell a story of reaching out and holding on even when the going is rough—and much like the material itself, they sparkle even as they brave the rockiest of roads.

—SUZANNE BEAL