SEPTEMBER

Nancy Barber
YUMYUK
October 30 - December 20, 2026

SEPTEMBER Gallery is thrilled to present *YUMYUK*, a solo exhibition of ceramic sculptures by Nancy Barber. The work in this exhibition was created over four decades working out of studios in NYC and Germantown, NY.

Barber's ceramics invite, delight, and defiantly push back: a tongue protrudes here, *Circus Balls* jut out there. The work finds harmony between just right and a little wrong, structure and flourish, *YUM and YUK.* Playful, sensual, exuberant, and grotesque, Barber's work, which includes vessels, platters, and sculptures, reference nature, architecture, food, and figure.

In Barber's world, fish are suspended inert, appearing repeatedly on platters, or as sculpted heads reminiscent of Roman spouting fountains. Here, they won't flutter on by or bite: you can only see them like this if Barber's sculpted them in terracotta or cooked them in olive oil and lemon, after slinging them over each shoulder walking home from the market toward her SoHo loft (where her dinner guests were already waiting). This dream scene of a long-gone 1970s New York was the reality for the artist, writer, and chef, who can sear, pinch, bake, fire, grill, smooth, scrape, glaze, and serve it any way you like.

Woman Who Swims with Fishes, a standout figurative piece from 2000, features a bikini-clad blonde in a commanding squat, clutching multiple fish under each armpit, holding another in her left hand, her right arm extended, about to catch more. She's the clear leader of their school, her lips and face shape mimicking theirs. And she knows what she wants: more of what she already has.

Two Bases In Search of a Top is a striking three-part sculpture composed of stacked platforms evoking East Asian architecture. Its palette of mossy and electric greens, punctuated by yellows, oranges, and blacks, connects it to much of the recent work created in Barber's Germantown studio. Despite its title, *Two Bases…* does, in fact, sport a top. Yet the suggestion that it could change at any moment, perhaps when no one is looking, captures the sense of animation that runs throughout the work, finding kinship in the sculptures of Niki de Saint Phalle and the choreography of Pina Bausch.

Bausch remarked, "Repetition is not repetition…The same action makes you feel something completely different by the end." In Barber's hands, repetition becomes a vehicle for surprise, with each variation in form or subject renewing our sense of why a thing is worth obsessing over. Like a Bausch dance, Barber's forms converge, diverge, and veer off stage left, expressing a range of possibilities. And then they do it all over again.

Born in Joliet, Illinois, Nancy Barber studied at Northwestern University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, Italy. At age 24, she moved to New York City, where she immersed herself in the downtown art and food scene. She studied at the Art Students League, worked in galleries, and wrote as an arts and food journalist. She opened a restaurant, *The Tenth Avenue Bar*, and created *NY Eats*, a public access television show that captured the relaxed intimacy of cooking in New Yorkers' homes.

In 1995, Barber spent a formative summer living and working near a ceramics factory in Deruta, Italy, where she designed a set of dishes later carried by Dean & DeLuca. Upon returning to New York, she continued making functional ceramic pieces—platters, plates, and vessels—at Greenwich House Pottery. Soon those ceramics evolved into obsessive, abstracted, and organic forms that defied traditional functionality.
Her work has been exhibited in numerous group shows in New York City and Hudson, NY. She lives and works between NYC and Germantown, NY.