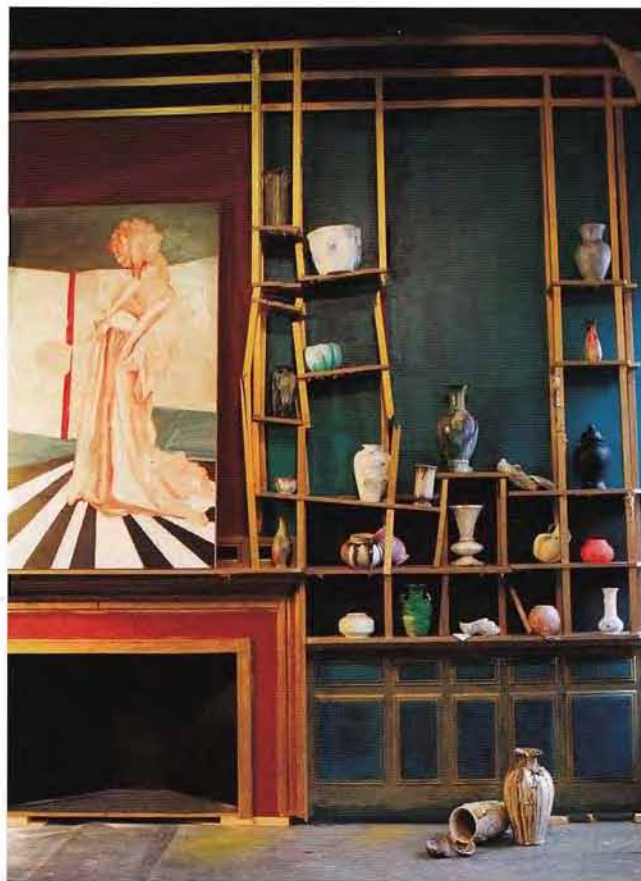


All That Glitters

When Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) curator Susan Cross invited Darren Waterston to create a mural as part of his upcoming solo exhibition “Uncertain Beauty” (opening Mar. 8), the New York-based artist turned to a monument of Gilded Age art for inspiration. Rather than a mere mural, the show’s centerpiece, *Filthy Lucre*, is a room-size installation that re-imagines James McNeill Whistler’s iconic *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* (1876-77), a total work of art that blends fine art and interior design.

Originally hired by shipping magnate Frederick Leyland to oversee the decoration of his London home, Whistler far exceeded his brief, transforming Leyland’s dining room with a fantastic mélange of paintings, Chinese porcelain, gilded woodwork and peacock-inspired patterns applied directly to the walls. When Leyland sued Whistler for overstepping his assignment, Whistler battled back, immortalizing his patron in his painting *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor)*, 1879, which inspired the name for Waterston’s *Filthy Lucre*.

Waterston enlisted a team of carpenters, glass artists, ceramicists and metalworkers to realize his version of *The Peacock Room*, which eschews the original’s pristine refinement. Crooked shelves hang precariously around the room, unevenly glazed ceramics lie on the ground in broken shards and the dramatic peacock murals appear to ooze off the walls, forming pools of molten gold on the floor. In a video posted on MASS MoCA’s website, Waterston describes the project as both a tribute to and a parody of Whistler’s proj-



View of Darren Waterston’s installation *Filthy Lucre*, 2013-14, mixed medium, 12 by 20 by 30 feet overall. Courtesy DC Moore Gallery, New York.

ect. “It felt very appropriate to interrogate this room again,” Waterston says, as the 19th-century work’s reflection of Gilded Age conspicuous consumption seems “very current, very much part of the contemporary art world.”