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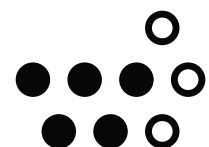
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*La papesse* (2024), Pauliina Pöllänen

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# CERAMICS

artz-prize

ceramic brussels 2024

Photo Geoffrey Fritsch. Courtesy ceramic brussels



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Untitled (detail), Peter Aerts  
Photo Yannick Milpas. Courtesy Transit gallery. ceramic brussels







## CERAMIC ARTS BREAK THE MOULD

ceramic brussels returns from 22 to 26 January 2025 with a bold programme blending innovation, tradition, and diversity. This international platform showcases transformative works and unique cultural exchanges in the heart of the European capital.

The introductory edition of ceramic brussels was the surprise of the year 2024. Whilst the art market was enduring a recession of rare intensity, a new contemporary art fair in Brussels, focused on a subject never before thrust into the spotlight, encountered immense success. “This grand *première* made a profound impression through an exceptional mobilisation of Belgian, European, and International galleries, both in their number and the remarkably high quality of works presented,” explains Gilles Parmentier, co-director with Jean-Marc Dimanche of the event [see p.24]. “Visitors, often surprised by the diversity and audacity of artistic proposals, discovered an event that transcends the framework of a simple fair, becoming an essential platform for encounters and exchanges. The enthusiasm generated by the salon reflects the growing interest in ceramics, not only as an artistic medium but also as a vector for reflection on traditions and innovations. Buoyed by the enthusiastic feedback from all participants, we have committed ourselves to a second edition for which we sought to push the boundaries even further.”

Surprises begin at the fair’s entrance with a monumental installation... in textile, created by Justine de Moriamé and Erika Schillebeeckx, the artistic duo from KRJST Studio [see box p.17]. “It is a bold gesture that transforms the entrance into an entirely distinct space of artistic expression. This creation, with its striking verticality, invites visitors to elevate themselves and enter an immersive and theatrical experience from the very first steps into the salon,” explains Jean-Marc Dimanche. “We sought to resonate the

figurative and sculptural dimensions of textile techniques with the materiality of ceramics. Inspired by Japanese repair traditions, we celebrate the aesthetics of transformation and the perpetuation of objects,” details Erika Schillebeeckx. “The installation also illuminates a profound tactile relationship: whether shaping clay or weaving fibres, these gestures envelop the spectator in an immersive experience. This juxtaposition of materials and techniques transcends their essences, giving birth to a living work, situated at the crossroads of the mastery and the unexpected.” Visitors are warned!

### Youth and femininity in the spotlight

Whilst the public had previously discovered the power of Johan Creten’s large sculptures in the previous edition’s aisles, organisers did not seek to outdo this, but instead to assume an even more marked curatorial commitment. “After Johan Creten, a major figure in sculptural ceramics, we wished to surprise with Elizabeth Jaeger [see p.34], a 35-year-old artist

whose innovative practice blends ceramics, bronze and immersive installations,” continues Jean-Marc Dimanche. “This choice marks an assumed rupture, reflecting our desire to explore new artistic territories whilst highlighting contemporary approaches that push the boundaries of traditional mediums.” The artist, represented by Mennour, provides the famous Parisian gallery the opportunity to present a solo show by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy for its first participation in ceramic brussels.

Continuing in this spirit of supporting contemporary creation, the fair fulfils one of its previous edition’s promises by presenting the winner of the ceramic brussels jury prize 2024: Damien Fragnon [see box p.50]. Strongly marked by the remarkably rapid impact the prize has had on his career, he presents his exhibition “The Alpha seashell grotto 2140”, a positive and narrative work that invites visitors to discover a possible future where nature and humanity might have succeeded in collaborating for the collective good.

As with the previous year, ten artists have been selected for the group exhibition of the ceramic brussels art prize [see p.46]. “We received significantly more applications this year: no fewer than 330!” Jean-Marc Dimanche enthuses. “The selection committee highlighted an impressive variety of practices, ranging from sound ceramics to performative explorations... or works questioning the relationship between ceramics and the body. Experimentation was an essential criteria, rewarding artists who do not hesitate to mix materials and push the medium’s boundaries.”

### *Tradition + innovation*

The intersection of ceramics and cutting-edge technology has sparked a fascinating evolution in art, where traditional techniques are reimaged using digital tools. Jonathan Keep and Michel Paysant stand out as pioneers, embracing this synergy while maintaining a profound connection to the essence of ceramics. Their work demonstrates how these new technologies enrich rather than overshadow traditional craftsmanship.

Jonathan Keep, a leader in 3D-printed ceramics, has been exploring the medium since 2010. For Keep, 3D-printing became “a way to bring ideas out of virtual reality and into physical, tactile objects.” His method involves clay paste extrusion, a process he likens to “digitally guided clay coil building,” echoing age-old techniques. While challenges persist — such as avoiding overhanging forms due to the layering process — Keep emphasises the role of the artist: “Too often people focus on the machine itself, not realising that creativity lies in the preparation of digital instructions.” Philosophically, he views technology as a continuation of tradition, stating that the Renaissance’s spatial measuring systems parallel modern computational tools. By using code to mimic natural patterns, Keep’s aim is to “highlight our deep material and psychological connection to the natural world.”

Michel Paysant offers a complementary yet distinct perspective, viewing computer code as “a new, universal language” that links previously disparate fields. Paysant explores the potential of 3D-printed ceramics to forge “a third path” between traditional techniques and technological innovation. His creative process often merges ceramics with fields like neuroscience, using tools such as eye-tracking to create designs. For example, Paysant describes a project where “eye movements produced music, which is then transformed into relief patterns and surfaced onto ceramic.” This cross-disciplinary approach underscores his belief in technology’s power to unite science, art and craft. However, Paysant remains clear-eyed about his tools: “There is no fascination for technology itself; they are soulless instruments, like a brush or a chisel.”

Both artists stress the importance of embracing these tools without succumbing to fear or over-reliance. Keep maintains that digital techniques are deeply rooted in the history of ceramics, while Paysant envisions a future where technology and tradition co-evolve. Paysant remarks, “digital tools do not replace traditional techniques; instead, they create new possibilities, enriching both practices.”

“ceramic brussels offers a pluralistic vision of contemporary ceramics, highlighting novelty whilst respecting traditional techniques. Here, richness and diversity converge around a unique medium:

ceramics,” enthuses Luna-Isola Bersanetti, who will present *Reptilians: A prophecy in five skins*, a project composed of five skins adorned with scales and porcelain pearls, inspired by legendary

“Institutions bring an inestimable richness to the fair by offering artist residencies, prize support and collaborations for educational and cultural programmes. These initiatives extend the fair’s impact well beyond its duration. — Gilles Parmentier

Mi2 vase, Eizo Miwa  
Courtesy MBA Fine Arts. ceramic brussels







ceramic brussels 2024

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency





Angel (2024), James B. Webster  
Courtesy Jonathan F. Kugel. ceramic brussels



feminine figures.

The feminine question is thus at the heart of this year's nominees' concerns, as with Pia Mougeot,

the *Revue de la céramique et du verre* — as well as the German publisher arnoldsche. “Publishers play an essential role in promoting

contemporary ceramics. Through their books and magazines, they explore the richness and diversity of this medium. Although publications

After Johan Creten, a major figure in sculptural ceramics, we wished to surprise with Elizabeth Jaeger, a 35-year-old artist whose innovative practice blends ceramics, bronze and immersive installations. — *Jean-Marc Dimanche*

### 3 questions to... Erika Schillebeeckx

whose “stories are rooted in feminist issues, imbued with a Mediterranean essence.” The prize further reflects how artists from all backgrounds now show interest in the medium: “I love the perpetually evolving nature of ceramics. It is a living material, with its own rhythm and needs: it dries, is shaped, then becomes humid again,” justifies Léonore Chastagner. “Subsequently, through firing, it undergoes a complete transformation, becoming solid and almost indestructible. I appreciate how ceramics embody these extremes.”

A novel opportunity this year for selectees is the chance to receive a monograph published by R.S.V.P. “In partnership with the fair and the French Embassy in Belgium, we have launched a prize to be awarded to one of the art prize laureates. We will offer a first monograph to be published for the 2026 edition of ceramic brussels,” commits Renaud Meunier, head of R.S.V.P. Editions. “Through this initiative, we wish to highlight practices like ceramics and sculpture, often under-represented due to their significant material constraints.” [see box p.20]

A new feature this year is a dedicated space for publishers. In addition to R.S.V.P. Editions, visitors will encounter Les Éditions Ateliers d'Art de France — which publishes

Erika Schillebeeckx and Justine de Moriamé constitute KRJST Studio.

#### How did your collaboration with ceramic brussels started?

Our collaboration began in spring last year when we first connected with Jean-Marc Dimanche in Milan during the Baranzate event, organised by Zaventem Ateliers and dedicated to design. There, we presented a selection of our creations blending furniture and tapestry. After returning from Italy, Jean-Marc reached out and we later had the chance to welcome him alongside Stéphanie Vessièrè to our studio to further discuss our work and sources of inspiration. This initial dialogue turned into an opportunity when Jean-Marc invited us to participate in several events in Brussels. We were delighted to present two of our works at the “De fil et de nature” exhibition at Botanique last September. Following this, the concept of creating a piece for the entrance of ceramic brussels took shape, marking an exciting new chapter in our collaboration.

#### How did you approach a textile installation for a ceramic-focused fair?

We were captivated by Jean-Marc and Gilles' intention to bridge the gap between ceramics and textiles. It was a bold and thought-provoking initiative and we were enthusiastic about the potential reflections this connection could spark in our creative process.

We have great trust in Jean-Marc's curatorial vision and we embraced the challenge of exploring new synergies between these mediums. Our practice often involves creating imaginary worlds with figurative or evocative elements, employing weaving, embroidery and knotting to push the boundaries of tapestry into more sculptural dimensions. This project allowed us to resonate with shared concepts, techniques and influences that inhabit both the ceramic and textile realms, particularly through the lens of Japanese culture.

#### What do you hope visitors experience through this installation?

We aimed to craft an immersive environment, evoking the *grandeur* of mysterious landscapes: towering trees, cascading waterfalls and the serene natural imagery found in Japanese iconography, such as rocks and streams. The colours reflect the palette of *raku* ceramics — deep blacks, metallic sheens and both subtle and saturated hues.

Our installation celebrates transformation, the interplay of mastered techniques with serendipitous outcomes. Visitors are invited to journey through this evolving work, where superimposed weavings and intermingling motifs give rise to new narratives. The tactile qualities of clay and fabric resonate here, offering an enveloping sensory experience of repair and rebirth — an homage to Japanese traditions like *Boro* textiles and the ceramic art of *Kintsugi*, where repair becomes a form of evolution and beauty.

specifically dedicated to ceramics remain rare, interest in this domain continues to grow, as evidenced by the emergence of new collections. This editorial dynamic contributes to broadening the understanding and appreciation of ceramics, whilst reinforcing its positioning in the contemporary art landscape,” adds Jean-Marc Dimanche.

growing interest in ceramics testifies to a need to reinvent our connection to materiality, in a context dominated by technology and digital mediums,” adds Henri Jobbé-Duval.

No fewer than sixty exhibitors have travelled from nearly fifteen countries, underlining the resolutely

László Borsódy. “In Hungary, the medium began to gain importance during the interwar *avant-garde*, reflecting a growing interest in autonomous artistic expression. However, as plastic art, ceramics became an emblematic practice in the 1960s and 1970s,” explains Zsolt Miklósvölgyi, exhibition curator of the gallery [see p.66].

“The day I received the award, I felt almost paralysed, as if the spotlight on me was too intense to handle. Over time, I have learned to manage all this attention better. It gives me the confidence I need to create more assertive works. — *Damien Fragon*

#### Enriched advisory board

The heart of a fair remains its galleries. To study their proposals, the two event directors have called upon new perspectives. “The advisory board has been enriched with several members, bringing varied viewpoints. Among them are recognised figures from the art world, such as Florence Reckinger-Taddei, president of the Friends of the Musée du Luxembourg, and Henri Jobbé-Duval, instigator of numerous artistic events in France,” explains Gilles Parmentier [see box p.29]. These new members have taken their role to heart.

“The mission of the advisory board is to reflect the entire richness and diversity of contemporary ceramics. It is not merely about presenting aesthetically beautiful works, but also creations that challenge conventions and bring new perspectives on our world.

We must demonstrate that ceramics is a medium in constant evolution, capable of combining tradition and innovation,” expresses Florence Reckinger-Taddei. “Ceramics currently finds itself at the crossroads between artistic creation and craftsmanship, affirming its modernity whilst reconnecting with a tactile and tangible relationship to material. This medium is beginning to be recognised as a genuine form of contemporary art. The public’s

international and universal nature of the subject. Among them, around twenty have made the audacious choice to present monographic exhibitions. Yves Gastou presents Agnès Debizet’s sculptures; Sorry We’re Closed showcases the colourful installations of Japanese artist Jun Kakeno; Modern Shapes, across two distinct spaces, displays the works of Dorothée Loriguet and the rawer pieces of Lucien Petit; Sèvres features Bachelot & Caron; CAPAZZA will exhibit Claude Champy’s recent works; Galerie du Passage focuses on Clémentine de Chabaneix’s animals; Delphine Courtillot presents her abstract sculptures on dudokdegroot gallery’s booth; Peters Aerts does the same at Transit gallery, while Belgian gallery La Peau de l’Ours presents Rémy Pommeret’s sculptures.

All geographies of contemporary ceramic creation are represented. Thus the Han Collection shows the delicacy of Korean creators on a stand where will coexist Shin Chul, Shin Sang-ho, Huh Sang-wook, Lee Song-am, Kim Hyun-jong and Lee Chang-su. Also in Asia, YOD gallery from Osaka exhibits the pieces of Toshiya Masuda, Kouzo Takeuchi, Kunihiro Akinaga and Aya Murata. Hungarian gallery sss presents the work of Lajos Csertó, Judit Vida and

Modern ceramics have also made their way to the fair since Michel Giraud’s participation in 2024. ARTRIUM brings French modern ceramicists including André Borderie, Pol Chambost, Georges Jouve, Suzanne Ramié-Madoura, the Ruellands, Vera Szekely and Gilbert Valentin. Belgian Patrick Lancz presents works from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by Arthur Craco, Jan Cobbaert, Alfred William-Finch, Roger Somville and Omer Coppens. There is also the opportunity to rediscover Picasso’s plates and sculptures in his solo show by HELENE BAILLY. “Ceramics often requires a learning process for the public to understand its place in modern art,” the gallerist justifies.

#### Clay on ice

Always challenging expectations, the organisers invite Norway this year — a land of fjords and northern lights — to celebrate the minimalism and particular attention to raw materials of the country’s artists [see p.40]. Five galleries have made the journey from there. “Contemporary ceramics in Norway are particularly characterised by their irreverent, playful and sculptural aspect, with a strong tendency to challenge traditional aesthetic norms,” says Joakim Borda-Pedreira from Oslo’s Ram Galleri. “Artists explore expressive forms and complex glazes,



*Vase pour les yeux* (2020), Michel Paysant

Courtesy Lélia Mordoch gallery. ceramic brussels



creating works marked by a certain roughness. Although the Norwegian ceramics market is relatively narrow, it benefits from a new generation of collectors who prioritise original works for their interiors." In addition to exhibitors from the country, Belgian gallery Spazio Nobile will dedicate half of its stand to Ann Beate Tempelhaug's large painted ceramic panels. The country will also be the focus of a complete day of discussions [\[see box p.42\]](#).

The talks programme has been substantially enriched this year with over fifteen round tables and presentations. Artists are given large opportunities to discuss diverse topics such as the contribution of new technologies to ceramic practice [\[see box p.12\]](#), the integration of ceramics in mixed-media works [\[see p.54\]](#) or the importance of literature in promoting the medium. A promising interview between Rafaël Pic from *Quotidien de l'Art* and Elizabeth Jaeger, this edition's guest of honour, is scheduled for 23 January. Collectors also have their say, with a round table allowing Ravi Bansahli and Danielle Marcovici to exchange views on their interest in the medium.

More than ever, museums are engaging with ceramics this January. "Institutions bring an inestimable richness to the fair by offering artist residencies, prize support and collaborations for educational and cultural programmes. These initiatives extend the fair's impact well beyond its five-day duration," concludes Gilles Parmentier. Keramis, CID the Centre of Innovation and Design at Grand-Hornu, Centrale for Contemporary Art and the Wallonie-Bruxelles Centre in Paris are all associating with ceramic brussels. Centrale is dedicating its window space to Juan Agustin David Llosa for the presentation of his objects in "My memories are stuck in the white part of your eyes". Keramis,

### *Redefining artistic publishing*

R.S.V.P. Editions is a young, independent publishing house based in Brussels, devoted to modern and contemporary art. With a passion for practices that transcend traditional artistic hierarchies — such as the distinctions between "fine arts" and "applied arts" — R.S.V.P. Editions explores the boundaries of creativity, shining a light on disciplines often overlooked. A major focus is the history of ceramics in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, an art form it aims to celebrate through thematic and monographic publications.

One of R.S.V.P.'s flagship projects is a comprehensive monograph on Jacqueline and Jean Lerat, celebrated figures in the evolution of stoneware art. Despite their influence, no single publication has brought together their collective work. Scheduled for release in 2026, the book will be a bilingual piece of design and craftsmanship.

The newly launched INSIDE collection offers a closer look at artists' lives and practices, blending interviews, photographs of their studios and analyses of their work. The first edition features Swiss ceramic sculptor Marit Kathriner, whose work redefines humanity's relationship with the natural world.

R.S.V.P. Editions books are crafted locally, with eco-friendly materials and meticulous attention to detail, from typography to chromatic precision.

The young publishing house takes part in ceramic brussels alongside two publishers with international reputations: Les Éditions Ateliers d'Art de France, which joins the fair for the second time as a partner; and arnoldsche, a world leader in publications focusing on art jewellery and ceramics. The latter offers a unique list of titles in the fields of fine arts, applied arts and design. It presents a series of prestigious books and monographs in a scenography featuring unique pieces by artists.

wholly dedicated to ceramic practice, is organising special visits to its two exhibitions featuring two couples: Rachel Labastie and Nicolas Delprat (she a ceramicist, he a painter), and Jeanne and Georges Vercheval (she an activist, he a photographer and collectors as a couple). On 23 January at 3:30pm, representatives from three institutions will debate the challenges of presenting ceramics in Europe, moderated by Christine Germain-Donnat from the French Ministry of Culture [\[see p.60\]](#). A week dedicated to a medium that reveals its richness and constant capacity for renewal through exhibitions, discussions and demonstrations. Let us celebrate matter, gesture and inspiration!

#### ceramic brussels

From 22 to 26 January. Shed 1 and 2bis  
Tour & Taxis. 3 rue Picard. Brussels. [ceramic.brussels](http://ceramic.brussels)



ceramic brussels 2024

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency









ceramic brussels 2024

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

# LUKE FULLER



*Barren* (2022), Luke Fuller

Photo Michael Harvey. Courtesy Galerie du Don, ceramic brussels

# CRAFTING THE FUTURE OF CERAMICS

After the success of its first edition, ceramic brussels 2025 redefines the medium through innovation, diversity and collaboration.

When Gilles Parmentier and Jean-Marc Dimanche [see box p.26] launched ceramic brussels in 2024, their vision was clear: to elevate ceramics as a dynamic and revolutionary art form. Following last year's success, the fair celebrates its second edition, bringing together an even broader network of participants while embracing an experimental edge. "The fair should be a total and global experience," says Parmentier, who, alongside Dimanche, has expanded the event's scope with new features, strengthening ceramics' role in contemporary art. ceramic brussels 2025 reaffirms its commitment to pushing the boundaries of this ever-evolving practice.

## What are the major updates for this year's edition?

**Gilles Parmentier (G.P.):** This year marks significant growth for the fair. We are featuring 65 galleries, compared to 55 in the previous edition, including participants from 13 countries. One of the fair's promises is to provide access to galleries and artists that visitors would not encounter in their home countries, ensuring a diverse and international representation of ceramic practices. Another key addition is our focus on modern ceramics, which are presented alongside contemporary works. This demonstrates the medium's evolution, connecting historical techniques to current innovations. Additionally, Norway is our guest country [see p.40], represented by five galleries at the heart of the fair. Norwegian Crafts' [see box p.44] involvement adds profound value, supported by cultural exchanges, talks and conferences [see box p.42] that give visitors, collectors and institutions insight into the Norwegian art scene.

## Why this focus on Norway?

### Jean-Marc Dimanche (J.-M.D.):

We were working on the idea of developing curiosity and novelty... then Norway came along. The opportunity arose when Norwegian Crafts approached us after last year's edition. The ceramic scene in this country is incredibly diverse, with many ramifications perfectly aligned with our event's vision. I believe it is important for a fair claiming to be international to promote artistic scenes that one would not immediately expect.

## Who is this year's guest of honour?

**J.-M.D.:** For this edition, our guest of honour is Elizabeth Jaeger [see p.34], an artist from the United States. Her work is expansive and challenges the conventional boundaries of the medium. She combines ceramics with other materials to create immersive installations. Her approach exemplifies what we aim to highlight at ceramic brussels: pushing the practice beyond traditional expectations and presenting it as a dynamic art form. Her art represents the originality we celebrate at the fair.



“We end up visitors of our own fair.

— *Jean-Marc Dimanche*

#### What other features can visitors expect?

**G.P.:** This year, we wanted to make the fair a global experience by enhancing it in several ways. One of the major initiatives is a content hub dedicated to ceramics. This platform of talks covers topics from collecting ceramics to their place in museums, as well as more technical questions, making it accessible to a variety of audiences. We are also introducing a pop-up restaurant and a cosy lounge area, designed for networking and informal meetings. These additions create a welcoming atmosphere where visitors can connect and discuss their interests in the medium. Additionally, we have dedicated an area for publishers focusing on ceramics like R.S.V.P. [see box p.20]. This is a significant proposal because it offers a deeper understanding of the medium. Presently, there are very few publications specialised in ceramics. By highlighting this sector, we hope to support its growth, even in its early stages.

**J.-M.D.:** More broadly, what is most exciting to me is how the fair reflects the shift from ceramics as a trend to a cultural groundswell. Practices we see today are much more liberated and diverse, and this vitality will only grow stronger in the coming years. We want ceramic brussels to become a moment of discussions and cultural exchanges. It is about crystallising ceramics' role in contemporary practices and offering an experimental setting where it can continue to evolve.

#### What can you tell us about the gallery prize?

**G.P.:** Another addition this year is the gallery prize, as a way to put participating galleries under the spotlight. After the success of the first edition, we wanted to give some recognition to galleries that truly excel at the fair. The prize focuses on galleries that stand out, whether

through their scenography, boldness, or the strength of their proposals.

**J.-M.D.:** The prize celebrates daring approaches that defend and elevate contemporary ceramics. We aim to highlight those remarkable galleries, whether through a bold curatorial choice, an inventive use of space, or a beautifully executed group presentation.

#### What about the art prize?

**J.-M.D.:** We are looking for new voices that surprise us. It is rather like our own research laboratory. There are strong proposals that are worth discovering in detail because they are extremely committed statements. We are also proud to say that this year's Art Prize winners include nine women and one man [see p.46]. The selected works are incredibly diverse, tackling themes from sound and performance to the

relationship between ceramics and the body through textiles.

#### How to present the full richness of the medium?

**G.P.:** Diversity is the core of our identity and plays a key role in our selection process. Some major galleries are joining us again this year, but we also sought out lesser-known galleries that did not participate in the previous edition, particularly from regions outside of Europe, such as Japan and the United States. This approach is essential because it ensures a wide range of ceramic practices, from traditional craftsmanship to *avant-garde* interpretations, also showing how cultural influences shape the medium.

**J.-M.D.:** Beyond galleries, diversity is also reflected in the fair's artistic proposals. At the entrance, visitors encounter a monumental

#### *Jean-Marc Dimanche, expert in these matters*

Jean-Marc Dimanche is a curator who has carved a distinct path in the world of craftsmanship and contemporary art. After steering the V.I.T.R.I.O.L. design agency for two decades, he boldly launched Maison Parisienne with Florence Guillier-Bernard in 2008, an innovative itinerant gallery dedicated to French artisan crafts. With remarkable determination, he orchestrated over fifty exhibitions across European capitals, significantly reshaping the perception of artistic craftsmanship.

His professional journey reveals a talent for strategic creative collaboration. In 2016, he was invited by H.R.H. the Hereditary Grand Duchess of Luxembourg to become a key strategist for the De Mains De Maîtres biennial — a role that perfectly showcases his ability to bridge artistic vision with institutional contexts. From 2019 to 2022, he transformed Serge Carrasco' ELEVEN STEENS into a dynamic creative space, embracing diverse artistic domains from visual arts to architecture.

As an independent curator, Dimanche continues to push artistic boundaries with compelling projects. His notable achievement in 2023 was co-curating alongside Christine Germain-Donnat, Grandeur Nature, the inaugural contemporary sculpture trail in Fontainebleau's English garden — an initiative set to become a biennial from 2025. His intellectual contributions extend beyond curation, with ongoing writing articles for the *Revue de la Céramique et du Verre* and *ArtsHebdoMédias* as well as collaborations on artists' catalogues that offer nuanced insights into creative processes.



*Untitled, Agnès Debizet*

Photo Alice Mesguich. Courtesy Yves Gastou gallery, ceramic brussels





*Atomic Teru* (2023), Kartini Thomas

Courtesy Kartini Thomas. ceramic brussels



embroidered textile piece from KRJST Studio [see box p.17], a duo of women artists. This installation creates a dialogue between textile and ceramic practices, highlighting unexpected connections between mediums. This entryway sets a space for innovative expression. By placing textiles at the forefront, we hope to spark discussions about the relationship between ceramics and other disciplines, offering a thought-provoking introduction to the fair.

#### What trends are you seeing in ceramics today?

**G.P.:** In recent years, we have observed a growing interest in ceramics [see p.66], not just from collectors but also from the general public. Artists are distinguishing between different media, and ceramics is becoming one of their preferred forms of expression. There is also a phenomenon of young artists wanting to return to tactile, hand-driven practices. This trend offers a refreshing contrast to our digitalised world. On the other hand, galleries are promoting the discipline, and institutions — such as La Cambre — have revitalised their ceramic workshops.

**J.-M.D.:** There is a movement in contemporary ceramics that goes beyond what we could have imagined. The medium has evolved far past its traditional roots in pottery. Today's artists are redefining ceramics by pushing its boundaries in both technical and conceptual ways. They combine their backgrounds with the medium, transforming it into something entirely new. What is especially exciting is the boldness and experimentation that we are seeing now — qualities that were less common in the past. This reflects a new and transformative stage for this art form, where its potential seems limitless. [see p.54]

#### Advisory board

Henri Jobbé-Duval and Florence Reckinger-Taddeï, members of the Advisory board for ceramic brussels, bring complementary perspectives to this unique event. Jobbé-Duval, renowned for his expertise in art fairs, emphasises the evolving place of ceramics in the broader art market. For him, the medium's rise parallels the journey of photography in the 1980s, transitioning from a niche to a mainstream art form. "The interest in ceramics stems from its tactile connection to material," he asserts, adding that this modern resurgence reflects a generational shift towards creativity interwoven with craftsmanship. By selecting galleries and artists showcasing both contemporary explorations and historical resonances, the committee offers visitors a comprehensive view of ceramics as a modern art form — bridging past, present and future.

Florence Reckinger-Taddeï, with a personal passion rooted in her early encounters with Picasso's ceramics and the famed fountains of the Fondation Maeght, highlights the medium's versatility. She sees ceramics as a dialogue between tradition and innovation, where artists push boundaries through experimental forms and techniques. For Reckinger Taddeï, the material's tactile and transformative nature — shaped by fire, texture and the artist's touch — makes it uniquely compelling. "It is not just about refinement. Ceramics can provoke, question and surprise," she notes.

Both stress the importance of diversity in the fair's representation. Jobbé-Duval highlights the global and cultural breadth of the selected galleries and their artists, who illustrate the medium's dynamism and its evolving role in contemporary art. Reckinger-Taddeï echoes this, celebrating the inclusion of emerging talents alongside established names. Together, they ensure that the fair portrays ceramics not merely as craft but as a vital and evolving part of the art world. "This fair, says Florence, provides a platform for ceramics to be seen as fine art, while also blurring lines between art, design and architecture."

At a time when audiences are rediscovering the tactile and authentic in art, ceramic brussels reflects a profound cultural shift. Both view this as a return to slower, more reflective artistic processes in an era dominated by technology. The renewed appreciation for ceramics — rooted in ancient traditions yet invigorated by contemporary practice — signals not just a revival but a redefinition of the medium. Jobbé-Duval explains, "ceramics is a modern art form that bridges creation and craftsmanship, responding to the needs and expectations of today's generation."

The fair has the support of renowned international experts in the field of ceramics as its advisory board 2025: Christine Germain-Donnat, Patrimony Curator, French ministry of Culture; Florence Reckinger-Taddeï, President of the Amis des Musées d'art et d'histoire Luxembourg; Ludovic Recchia, Art historian and curator specialising in modern and contemporary ceramics, Director of Keramis; Geertje Jacobs, Director of the EKWC international artist-in-residence and centre-of-excellence for ceramics; Magdalena Gerber, Artist, Professor and Head of CERCCO, HEAD-Geneva; and Henri Jobbé Duval, Commandeur des Arts et Lettres, Co-founder of FIAC, Chairman of Source Garouste Hermine.

## INTERVIEW

**G.P.:** Conversely, connecting contemporary ceramics with its historical context is also crucial. It helps to create a dialogue between today's innovations and the achievements of the past, establishing ceramics' relevance over time.

### The fair gains some partners this year...

**G.P.:** Indeed, more organisations are getting involved. Partnerships with institutions like Keramis [see p.60], CID du Grand-Hornu and Centrale for Contemporary Art are incredibly valuable. They allow us to build bridges between the artistic, educational and industrial worlds. These collaborations create opportunities for visitors to engage with ceramics on multiple levels, whether through exhibitions, workshops or talks. They also help position ceramic brussels as a hub for dialogue and innovation.

### What future do you foresee for ceramic brussels?

**J.-M.D.:** The fair has opened a new path, drawing attention to ceramics in a way that had not been done before. There is genuine curiosity, especially among contemporary art collectors who may not specialise in ceramics. This curiosity did not exist previously and it allows us to position ceramic brussels as a unique voice in the art world, addressing an area that was previously underexplored.

**G.P.:** We aim to continue growing as a global platform, fostering connections between artists, collectors, and institutions. Beyond its role as a market platform, the fair aspires to be an international hub for networking and collaboration, defending the ongoing evolution of ceramics. It is not just about trends; it is about participating in a revolution in how ceramics is perceived and practised in today's world. Each edition builds on the last, paving the way for future innovation and exploration.



**Landscapes platter III (2018), Laurin Schaub**  
Photo Hansruedi Rohrer. Courtesy Galerie Nendo. ceramic brussels









Jean-Marc Dimanche and Gilles Parmentier  
Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

# PORTRAIT CRACKLE



*A crackle (2023), Elizabeth Jaeger*  
Courtesy Mennour



## NEXT-GENERATION CERAMICS

Elizabeth Jaeger, guest of honour at ceramic brussels 2025, talks about the space of ambiguity her ceramic sculptures occupy, and how they convey nebulous emotions.

Elizabeth Jaeger's [see box p.36] ceramic sculptures are dark. Chromatically, they tend towards a palette of blacks, browns and greys. And then there's the content, so often anxious, fearful, and ominous. Yet, even Jaeger's most troubling works can inspire laughter. Take for example a series of ceramic dog sculptures she created for a recent exhibition called "Contempt" at Capsule Shanghai. The dogs are trapped within a metal fence. Their skin is crawling with bugs. How they got themselves into this horrifying situation is unclear. Anyone capable of empathy feels terrible for them. But to anyone who has ever lived with a dog, the look on their face is also unmistakable — they did this to themselves. They have been bad, but they want to be good, and now they're waiting, covered in bugs, to be told it's okay.

"I look into the dogs' eyes, and there is a sense of profound knowingness that exceeds the capacity of human senses and understanding," Jaeger says. "I choose not to try and interpret what they know." That space of ambiguity is where humour finds refuge in Jaeger's work. The figures seem enmeshed in something scary, but they also seem open to hope, even if foolishly. Maybe they make us laugh because we've been there, in the midst of tragedy trying to believe everything is going to be fine. "In my personal life, I have a bad habit of laughing in unfortunate situations," Jaeger says. "The issues we're confronted by in life at times are so painful, overwhelming or absurd the only thing to do is laugh."

Recently, Jaeger visited the Capuchin Monk crypt in Palermo, Sicily. The monks are known

for decorating their crypts elaborately with the bones of the dead. In Palermo, the skeletons are dressed in clothing, like mannequins or dolls. When Jaeger entered the crypt with a friend, her friend was horrified, but Jaeger felt something different.

"This space is about the ephemerality of life and the spirituality within that," she says. "It's also an experience of intense ambiguity, where I was confronted with both the feelings of fear, absurdity, and serenity. Is this place scary, or is it beautiful? These bodies have been treated with love and tenderness, by people who loved and cared for them. At the same time, the public display of skeletons, or poorly conserved mummies, is also disquieting. It begs the question, what is the shape of this specific reverence?"

### **Withheld, but connected**

An interest in ambivalence also comes out in Jaeger's work. "When I'm moulding clay, I am trying to find the type of gaze where there is something withheld

*Bio*

Elizabeth Jaeger was born in San Francisco, California, in 1988. She studied art at The Art Institute of Chicago, the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts in Nancy, France, and the Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Her work has been exhibited at the Aspen Art Museum, in White Cube Gallery in London, at the Whitney Museum of American Art and at MoMA PS1, among other institutions. She is based in New York.

sculpture told Jaeger they interpreted the look on the woman's face as joy. Jaeger said she also intended to convey something more like discomfort, or resignation, like the woman was making the best of

**“If something is easy to express in words, why make a sculpture about it? I am intentionally making things ambiguous. The point is to be hard to talk about. — Elizabeth Jaeger**

but you can also feel connected,” she says. “Like when you are people watching on the train. It is not important to have a precise narrative of another’s interior life. By just gazing, you feel the flavour of their anxiety, joy, anger, or despair.”

Watching is where Jaeger’s process begins. She watches people and animals in search of a feeling. Finally an image develops in her mind, and the feeling guides her as she works to manifest the image in clay. “Everything is hand built, so I really wrestle with it,” she says. “I start with a vague idea and then fight the clay into becoming a subject.”

The wrestling process does not end in the ceramic studio. It extends to the metal shop where Jaeger uses a plasma cutter and grinder to smooth out the metal parts of her sculpture. Then she welds them together, uses acid to patina them, then sometimes adds wooden elements or parts casted from hand moulded wax.

Among her most expressive works to come out of that process is a sculpture of a rat Jaeger included in her 2023 exhibition “Prey”, at Mennour, Paris. The rat stands tall on two legs with its arms spread, as if performing on stage. The piece was inspired by a moment in the studio. Jaeger says she was working quietly when a rat pranced in. “The rat didn’t know I was in there. He was skipping along, almost

humming to himself. I saw this private rat moment. Then we locked eyes, the rat froze, and quickly scurried away. He became prey again; became what we know about him because of our relationship to him; vermin.”

Jaeger realises people come to her exhibitions with feelings of disgust towards rats, for good reasons. But as someone who had a pet rat as a child, she says rats are also sweet, sensitive creatures, who are caring towards others. To capture a look that encompasses that ambiguity, that’s endearing without being cutesy, she says, “I try to make my rat sculptures appear as if they are in their own private space of joy and self satisfaction. This is also a gesture away from a human-centric point of view. These creatures have lives and value outside of our existence.”

**Predator, prey, or both?**

Human figures also appear prominently in Jaeger’s *œuvre*. In the exhibition “Prey” they are depicted in miniature, contained within tiny boxes. Trapped in their strange dollhouses, entangled in something sinister but vague, they appear to be as unsure as we are whether they are the prey or the predator.

In a 2015 exhibition at MoMA PS1 in New York, Jaeger exhibited a mixed media ceramic sculpture of a nude man and woman in a contorted romantic position, titled *Maybe we die so the love doesn’t have to*. One viewer who encountered the

something objectionable. Both things can be true, Jaeger points out, in art and in life.

“The power of sculpture is you can make something contradictory in the same piece,” she says. “Language is set up in binaries, one thing means the exclusion of another thing. But a sculptor can make something be the thing and not the thing at the same time. A person’s reaction can be paradoxical too.”

Misunderstandings can also be fruitful and serendipitous, Jaeger believes. For evidence, she shares the story of how bird sculptures became ubiquitous in her practice. “I had done a lot of volunteer work with the Audubon Society, going out at dawn and rescuing stunned and wounded birds from window strikes,” Jaeger explains. “Through that experience, I learned how the bone density of migratory birds has been diminishing in direct correlation with their shrinking habitats, that birds in a sense are emblematic of ecological collapse.”

Later, after her experience with the Audubon Society, some of Jaeger’s sculptures were being exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. As Jaeger was leading a group of teenagers through the show, one of them pointed out there was bird excrement on one of the vases. Jaeger in turn pointed it out to a museum docent. The docent said it



Elizabeth Jaeger  
Courtesy Mennour



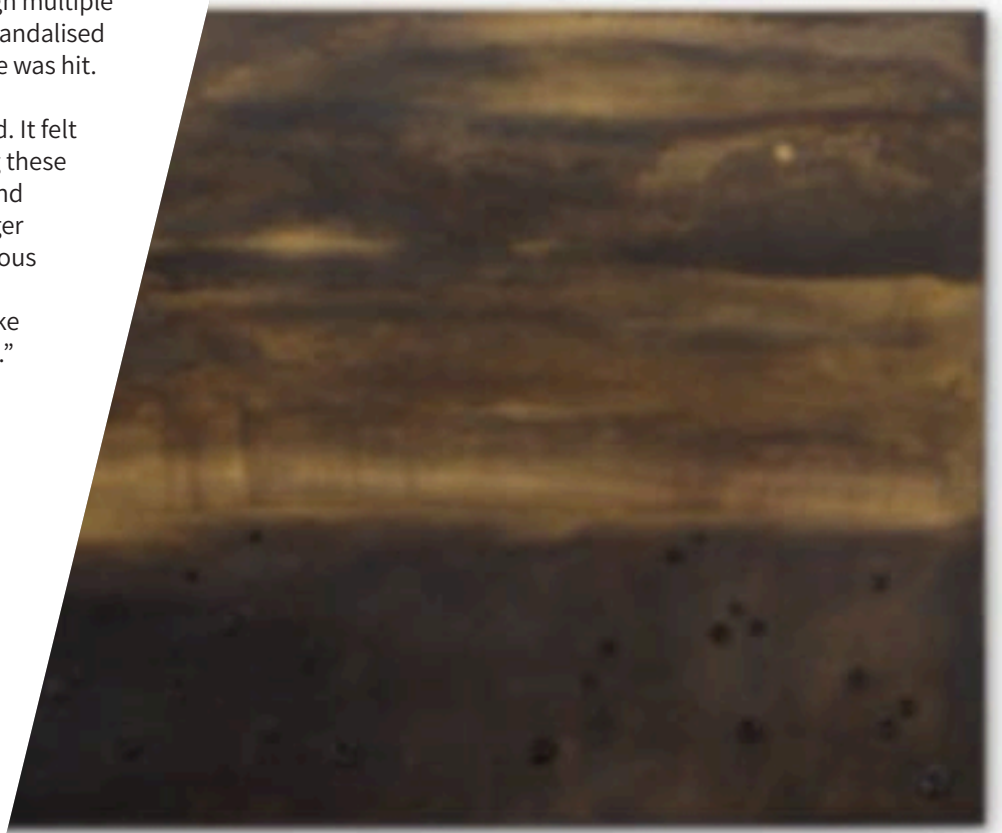
## PORTRAIT

was supposed to be there, that it was the artist's intention. Jaeger told them, "This is embarrassing and I apologise, I'm the artist, and it's new since yesterday."

The incident caused what she calls, "a five alarm museum problem with professionals from every department coming to inspect the work." Jaeger asked if she could just wipe it off, but they told her she couldn't, because at that point it was an insurance issue. The damage would have to be documented and the work professionally conserved. Security later looked through CCTV footage and found a targeted attack: a single bird entered the museum, travelled through multiple galleries, perched on Jaeger's vases, vandalised them, then flew back out. Nothing else was hit.

"The bird made a point to be included. It felt like the right moment to start making these judgmental looking bird sculptures and placing them in my exhibitions," Jaeger says. "The birds I make have an ominous feeling, a knowingness of our human folly, but they also look vulnerable, like creatures you would feel empathy for."

Jaeger has a similar feeling towards the beetles that have been showing up in her exhibitions lately by the hundreds. They are unmistakably ominous, a sign of something that might be out of control. Yet, each one also has its own countenance, and they're smiling, a hint of an ambiguous personality that perhaps is not as scary as it seems. Are the beetles part of an army coming to overwhelm us, or just individuals going along their happy way, like the rat in her studio, who just happen now to be in a group? Jaeger wants us not to be sure. "When I make the figures, it's a process of meeting them," she says. "As they're being moulded out of clay they become their own thing. It is an emotional relationship between us as they become what they are."



View of the "Elizabeth Jaeger: Prey" exhibition (2023)

© Elizabeth Jaeger. Courtesy Mennour



# FLOODS



*The new cosy* (2023), Nellie Jonsson

Courtesy QB Gallery. ceramic brussels



## CERAMICS ON FIRE

Ceramics is a fast growing medium in Norway, both with collectors in the craft and design market and as a preferred choice for contemporary artists. It is the gallerists and art dealers of Norway who are on the front lines of the trend, defending the medium's past and advocating for its future.

Norway has a relatively new relationship with ceramics. Whereas clay objects have been made in Southern Europe and China for 30,000 and 20,000 years respectively, pottery was not manufactured in Norway until the 16<sup>th</sup> century [see box p.42]. Despite the country's short history with the medium, it has established a global reputation for excellence in the field. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Norwegian companies such as Figgjo, Porsgrund Porselænsfabrikk, and Stavangerflint were making some of the best ceramic objects in the world. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the medium was so popular among everyday Norwegians that numerous schools and craft pottery studios had opened all over the country. Today, the medium is commonplace within the practices of many Norwegian contemporary artists. To get a sense of the strength of the present and future of Norwegian ceramics scene we spoke to three gallerists from Norway who are exhibiting at ceramics brussels 2025.

**Irija Øwre, FORMAT (Oslo): “Ceramics has become a larger part of the contemporary art scene in recent years.”**

“Our presentation at ceramic brussels consists of three ceramic artists representing the large variety in both the Norwegian and Nordic ceramic field. Torbjørn Kvasbø, Pauliina Pöllänen and Eyvind Solli Andreassen reflect the different tendencies within the unique and celebrated Nordic craft scene. Their work varies in techniques, ceramic materials and artistic approach. Through working in the field for many years, I have seen the many different ways ceramics can be used to express artistic concepts and the inherent properties of the material. This diversity, combined with ceramicists' important

material knowledge, has strengthened my interest and joy in conveying this field.”

“Ceramics has become a larger part of the contemporary art scene in recent years. Young artists are working more interdisciplinary and are opening up the various dividing lines in art. The material-based approach has been given a lot of attention in recent years and increases the public's interest in technique and new artistic expressions, which gives the ceramic field the opportunity to reach an even wider audience.”

**Mikaela Bruhn Aschim, QB Gallery (Oslo): “I think ceramics is a very emotional medium.”**

“At ceramic brussels we exhibit ceramic sculptures by the emerging Swedish ceramicist Nellie Jonsson (born 1992 in Umeå, Sweden). Jonsson is an emerging artist primarily working with ceramic sculpture and installations. She graduated from the Oslo Academy of the Arts with a BFA and an MFA in material-based art with a focus on ceramics. She is currently based

in Oslo. By immortalising common objects in clay, Jonsson throws references to consumer culture and everyday life, capturing memories around objects in our lives that we usually don't reflect on."

"I think ceramics is a very emotional medium, there the traces of the artist and the processes are present — frozen (burnt) in time. Ceramic sculpture is our main focus as ceramics is a favoured medium by artists and collectors here in Norway. Also, I love it, which I guess is the main reason that the gallery has a focus on it. The trends in ceramics seem to me to be very much involved with the rest of the art field. Some are expressive, some are naïve, some are painterly and some are political, etc. All of the ceramicists that we work with have been educated at KHiO in Oslo where they place ceramics within, and not outside, the contemporary art field."

**Joakim Borda-Pedreira, RAM galleri (Oslo): "Norwegian contemporary ceramic art is often irreverent, playful and sculptural."**

"We present four young artists at ceramic brussels. They all have in common that they are not originally Norwegian. Three of them are from Asia, but came to Norway as students and have since remained: Mingshu Li (China), Lydia SooJin Park (Korea) and Takumi Morozumi (Japan). Their work mixes artistic influences from Asia and the West, and relates to centuries of cultural exchange between Europe and Asia. In addition, we also exhibit a British young ceramicist named Sam Chatto, who trained in Japan and recently had a studio residency with the legendary ceramic artist Torbjørn Kvasbø at Center for Ceramic Art in Ringebu, here

### *Talking Norway*

Norwegian Crafts [see box p.44] has partnered with ceramic brussels to curate a programme of talks for the 2025 edition of the fair. The aim of these panel conversations is to highlight and discuss ceramics in Norway from three different perspectives, all of which are evident in the contemporary Norwegian ceramics landscape. On 24 January, from 12pm.

#### **Ceramics in public space**

In this conversation, artists present some of their projects for art in public space and discuss possibilities and challenges of working with clay to be shown outside of a gallery space. The talk also dive into some of the considerations and processes that are specific to projects that are commissioned for public institutions such as schools, nursing homes and prisons.

#### **Clay meets painting**

This conversation dive into some of the parallels and crossovers of working artistically with ceramics and painting or drawing. The panel include artists that may have a painterly approach to working with clay, or who include other modes of expression alongside their ceramic art.

#### **Ceramics: art and industry**

Industrial production is an important part of ceramics history and cultural history in general. This conversation goes into how artists and industry professionals can collaborate and exchange knowledge and skills through ceramic processes, and examine some of the gains both parties may experience from such meeting points.

Norwegian Crafts is a non-profit organisation funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and equality and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs. It promotes contemporary Norwegian craft and design internationally through exhibitions, events, and collaborations, and supports Norwegian artists in reaching new audiences and fosters international dialogue in the field of craft.

Programme and timetable available on [www.ceramic.brussels](http://www.ceramic.brussels).

in Norway. It is very interesting how he blends in traditional Japanese techniques in experimental contemporary art forms."

"My background is Art History, but I have a personal obsession with ceramics, as is often the case when you work with it. It might come from my childhood, I have roots in South America and grew up with pre-columbian and indigenous ceramics that my

parents had collected. I do not consider myself to be a dealer, but rather a collector and someone who wants to disseminate interest and knowledge of ceramic art. As a gallery we exist for the benefit of the artists, and when we place their works in collections that is a way of helping artists in their career."

"The Norwegian ceramics market is a relatively small market, but steady and I see that there is a new



Hege Henriksen

Photo Kaja Bruskeland. Courtesy Norwegian Crafts



generation of collectors that have become very interested in ceramics. The most noticeable development is that trendy young people now collect ceramics as interior objects for the home. This segment avoids very large pieces, but playful and colourful objects are favoured. They collect primarily their own generation.”

“Our artists experiment a lot and there is a tendency to deconstruct aesthetic norms. Norwegian contemporary ceramic art is often irreverent, playful and sculptural. Complex glazes and rough expressive forms are significant. There is a roughness to Norwegian ceramics which is very different from continental ceramics, which often leans towards the more elegant and decorative in my opinion. The National Academy of the Arts in Oslo has one of Europe’s best programs for ceramic art, and unparalleled facilities which allow the students to create whatever they want. That has led to a very strong scene for ceramic art, and additionally there is an international trend of increased interest for ceramics which has led artists that previously worked with painting or photography to take up ceramic practice. So it is possible to argue that ceramics are becoming prestigious, but on the other hand there are relatively few galleries specialising in ceramic art, and many larger institutions and museums have yet to open up for this medium. Retrospectives with important ceramic artists are very few and far between unfortunately. We focus mainly on the younger generation of artists, but one or two exhibitions each year are devoted to established artists, and when it comes to the ceramic artists some of them should really have been commissioned by museums.”

### 3 questions to... Hege Henriksen

Hege Henriksen is the Director of Norwegian Crafts.

#### What is Norwegian Crafts?

Norwegian Crafts is a non-profit organisation funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We were founded in 2012 by the Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts, an artists’ member organisation that was itself established in 1975, out of an artist rebellion. Norwegian artists wanted more scholarship, working grants and opportunities to support crafts made by professional practitioners.

Our mandate is “to strengthen the international position of contemporary crafts from Norway.” We work to provide visibility, platforms and support for Norwegian and Norway-based artists to increase and strengthen their activity abroad. We also work a lot with theory development and market development. In addition to strengthening the position of the artists, we also work with galleries, curators, museums, etc.

#### You use the words art and craft interchangeably. Is there still any relevance in distinguishing between the two terms?

We have an ongoing discussion about this topic. In Norwegian we have a word *kunsthåndverk*. It means something like art-craft, including both elements in one word. We insist on using this term, wanting to strengthen it. Moving forward we focus more on the handmade. In these times we live in, with an abundance of digital tools and AI, the craft field has all this knowledge about materials and techniques. There is so much value there. But if we don’t keep preserving and developing it, there is a risk that it will disappear.

#### Is there a current project you feel highlights the importance of the work Norwegian Crafts is doing?

Yes, our Curator in Residence programme, where we have, until now, worked with four different international curators to invigorate our programming and create connections with a large spectrum of the craft field. With Sámi architect and artist Joar Nango we created a lot more connections in the Sámi community, and working with curator Zoe Black we have created a connection between the craft field in Norway and Sápmi with the craft community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We have also reintroduced our online magazine. Norwegian Crafts started out as an online magazine in 2010 before we became a non-profit organisation, and now we have The Vessel as a central part of our theory development programme. We invite new guest editors for every issue, which brings new perspectives to the topics being discussed. We aim to work with a broad understanding of craft, both with the magazine and with our Curator in Residence programme, because the future of craft is to make sure that it’s relevant to as many as possible.

Turquoise (2024),  
Eyvind Solli Andreassen.  
Courtesy Eyvind Solli Andreassen.  
FORMAT. ceramic brussels





# NOTHING



*La reconstruction* (2024), Luna-Isola Bersanetti

Courtesy Luna-Isola Bersanetti, ceramic brussels



## CRAFTING NARRATIVES

Ten ceramic brussels art prize laureates reimagine the boundaries of this medium, through innovative practices that blend tradition and bold innovation [see p.54]. Through delicate porcelain, 3D-printing [see box p.12], or textiles, their work pushes contemporary ceramics into new realms, crafting narratives that bridge time and disciplines.

### **Asya Marakulina. *Traces in clay***

“What captivates me is that I never fully control the process. The result always catches me by surprise,” explains Asya Marakulina. For her, ceramics is a medium of experimentation, seamlessly blending with her background in graphics, textiles and installation. “It is a collaboration and co-creation with the material, an endeavour to capture intricate and contradictory emotions in a tangible form.” For ceramic brussels 2025, she presents *There was a home* (2024), a series of works reflecting the remnants of demolished dwellings. Inspired by traces exposed to the street — coloured walls, tiles, or mirrors — Marakulina explores the intimate life and stories woven into these fragments. “These traces have a profound impact on me. They narrate stories of lives once lived but now vanished.”

at ceramic brussels, where she presents *Reptilians: A prophecy in five skins*, a collection of “skins” adorned with porcelain scales and beads that honour female figures like Mélusine. These “skins” serve as symbolic armour, celebrating transformation and empowerment. Performative videos accompany the immobile pieces, evoking the sounds of rattlesnakes and revealing their movement. Bersanetti reimagines ceramics as a dynamic medium, merging tradition with innovation through meticulously crafted pieces.

### **Luna-Isola Bersanetti. *Textile ceramics***

Particularly interested in the relationship to movement, Luna-Isola Bersanetti redefines ceramics by fusing it with textiles. “How might ceramics influence or constrain movement?” she ponders, as her work explores the duality of “fragility and resilience,” transforming ceramics into wearable body extensions through sewing, knitting, and weaving techniques. Her multidisciplinary practice finds a stage

### **Éléonore Griveau. *Tech and crafts***

As co-founder and Director of Cone 7-Ceramic Workshop, Éléonore Griveau supports research and innovation in this field. Her practice blends ceramics with electronics to explore humanity’s relationship with nature and technology: “I create interactive installations that reflect human impact on contemporary ecosystems.”









Capsule #2 (2023), Maëlle Dufour

Photo Ithier Held. Courtesy Maëlle Dufour. ceramic brussels



In *PRODROME II*, she combines organic materials with synthetic elements, using CO<sub>2</sub> sensors to translate visitors' breath into vibrations that gradually crumble the porcelain layers. Inspired by the Lascaux cave, this work symbolises the environment's fragility. Her installations explore themes of environmental degradation and human impact, creating a dialogue between past, present, and future. At ceramic brussels, she showcases both *PRODROME II* and *Kevnid-mor*, inviting audiences to reflect on the balance between technology, nature and sustainability.

**Pia Mougeot. Exploring gender**

"What does it mean to be a woman?" asks Pia Mougeot while exploring this question through social and intimate lenses. Rooted in feminist narratives, her practice navigates the complex theatre of womanhood — spanning the sexualisation of young girls, societal projections of the *femme fatale* as well as the multifaceted roles of women as trophies, feminists and mothers. "Being a woman is a social construct, to be questioned and defended."

Mougeot sees ceramic brussels as a vital platform to engage diverse audiences, valuing the opportunities it offers to emerging artists. For this edition, she exhibits past and new pieces addressing themes of childhood, sexuality and gender relations, offering a bold and playful challenge to traditional narratives: "I am delighted to address an audience of all ages through humour."

*3 questions to... Damien Fragnon*

Damien Fragnon is the laureate of the last ceramic brussels jury prize.

**How has winning the prize impacted you and your work?**

Winning the prize has put my work, research and the way I question the world under the spotlight. I now take full responsibility for my approach and speak about it more easily. I am also receiving more exhibition opportunities, which help disseminate, develop and present my work in France and internationally. There is now more attention and curiosity about what I do, on artistic and human levels, which is very reassuring. The reception of this prize supports my creation and helps my forms become more assertive and joyful.

**What are you presenting this year?**

I present "The Alpha seashell groto 2140", a speculative narrative blending science fiction with a potential future. The exhibition depicts a shell groto where nature has created a resilient world, discovered by individuals capable of perceiving their environment horizontally and benevolently. It includes electric and anagama firing installations, ceramic recipes inscribed like cave drawings, mural ceramics from a year's of experimentation as well as my expanding *A rocky wind* series.

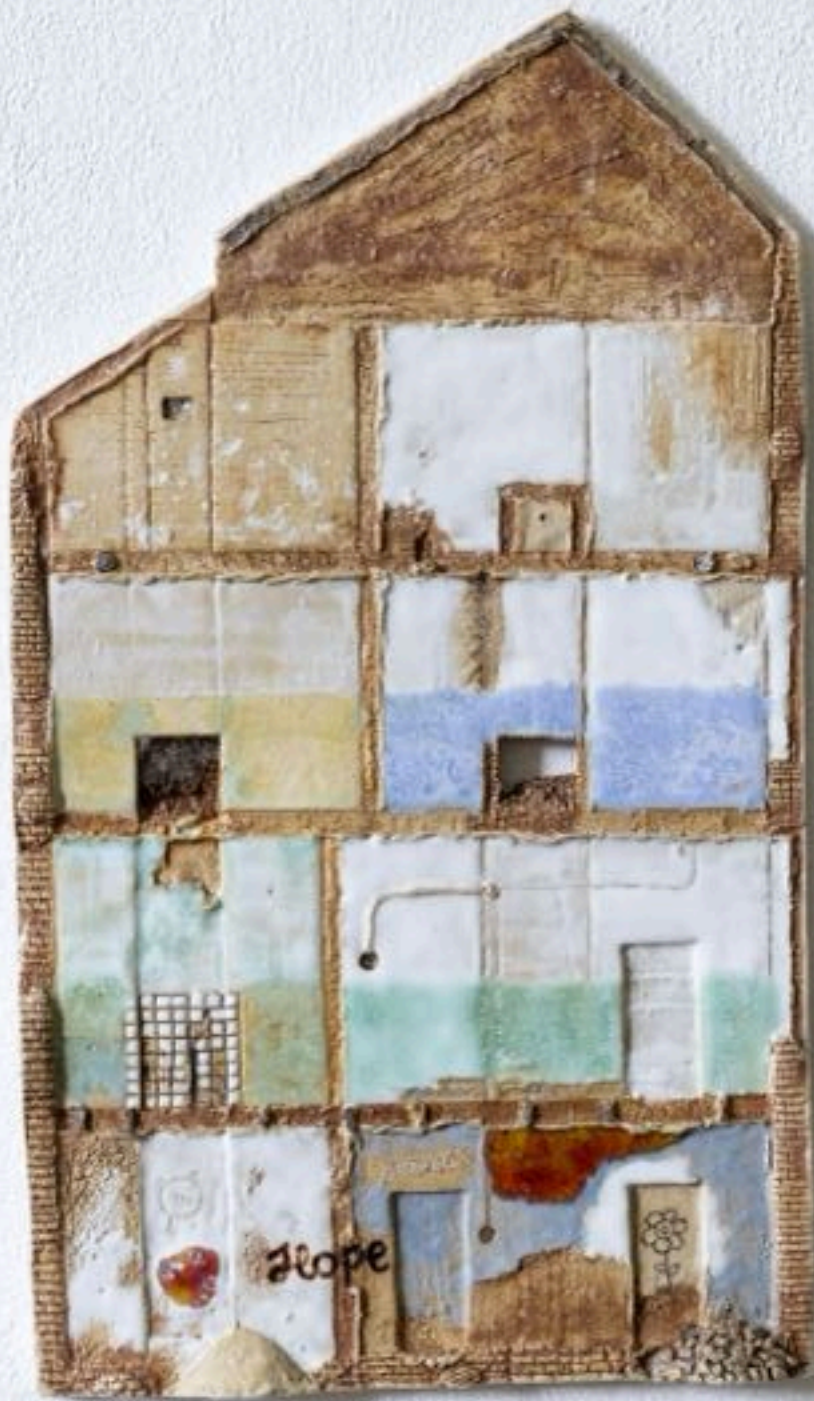
**In which direction is your creativity pushing you?**

I am concluding a series of exhibitions, including shows in Lisbon for the Sète-Lisboa festival, São Paulo, the Vosges region, Turin with Artissima and Montpellier with a duo show alongside Naomi Maury. Looking ahead, I have solo shows at Galerie Nendo in Marseille and Galerie AL/MA in Montpellier, along with group exhibitions at the CWB in Paris. I am also currently doing a residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts with the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Creatively, I am deepening my research into eco-repair — a way of repairing living things through ceramic erosion. My focus is on increasing the porosity of clay. This allows me to continue exploring natural rocks and sands while maintaining a ceramic base that deteriorates despite the lack of acidity in the soil. I am also working on different ways of presenting ceramics. These intersecting axes take me into unfamiliar but exciting territories.

**Léonore Chastagner. Figurative intimacy**

Moved by the joy and calm ceramics brought her, Léonore Chastagner shifted her practice from enamel to clay, using ceramics as a medium to inscribe everyday intimacy. What captivates her about this material is its immediacy and transformative nature. "There is no intermediary between the material and your hand. It is a direct and personal relationship." She is also drawn to its duality: "Shapeless yet definitive, supple yet brittle. A living material with independence."

Her work captures tenderness and intimacy through figurative forms, recurring themes like folded garments, bodily gestures and home spaces. For ceramic brussels, she exhibits stoneware and porcelain works spanning from 2020 to 2024, including a model interior, a pair of legs and an oversized ball of wool. "I am bringing them together like pieces of a puzzle. They are somehow all part of the same story."



*There was a home* (2024), Asya Marakulina

Courtesy Asya Marakulina, ceramic brussels

**Maëlle Dufour. Timekeeper**

Global issues like environmental degradation and resource scarcity are at the heart of Maëlle Dufour's installations. In *Jusqu'ici tout va bien* (2022), toxic ceramic shells slowly corrode, evoking the fragile balance of ecosystems. This work features at ceramic brussels, where the artist hopes to spark diverse conversations. For Dufour, ceramics is more than a medium — it is a storyteller of decay, renewal and human evolution. It allows her to shape complex works that “question progress through past, present, and future eras.” Her art explores the intersections of ancient knowledge and new technologies, tracing the origin, memory, and history of objects. “My works exist between presence and absence, resonating with ephemeral experiences that time will inevitably transform.”

**Raphaël Emine. Bio-ceramics**

Fusing traditional clay modelling techniques with technologies like 3D-printing, Raphaël Emine creates sculptures that explore the intersection of biology, nature and human creation. His forms draw inspiration from botany, entomology, architecture and mathematics. Emine introduces living elements such as plants, insects, and bacteria into his work, crafting sculptures that accommodate organic life. He champions the integration of tradition, technology and natural sciences, pushing the boundaries of contemporary ceramics and fostering speculative, dreamlike explorations. His work reflects on biology, investigating the potential cohabitation of living and non-living elements.

**Camilla Hanney. Interior design**

“I feel that working with ceramics can provide a deliberate fusion of high and low art,” says Camilla Hanney, who explores the medium's ability to exist in opposing states. Her practice navigates the tensions between strength and vulnerability, beauty and horror, offering an honest portrayal of the human condition. “I reclaim the pain and pleasure of being a body through clay,” she explains, transforming ceramics from a traditional craft into an exploration of the messy and macabre. By blending humour with discomfort, she challenges taboos around femininity and sexuality. At ceramic brussels, Hanney presents a sculptural series examining the skeletons beneath our skin. Using materials like porcelain, pearl and gold, she reflects on the transience and fragility of life.

**Pascale Robert. Three stars**

Pascale Robert's ceramics lie at the intersection of tradition and parody. After studying in Strasbourg and completing a residency in Marseille, she embraced ceramics, bringing three dimensions to her canvases. She combines party culture with studio toil, using historical references to produce playful works. Inspired by photographs of friends enjoying meals, Robert delves into folklore and culinary traditions. “I like to tease out folklore and culinary particularities. My catches are sometimes undignified, pareidolical, suggestive, grotesque, often irreverent,” she says.

**Béatrice Guilleman. Landscape**

Béatrice Guilleman has developed an artistic journey blending sculpture, ceramics, and architectural forms. She initially studied sculpture at the Beaux-Arts in Rennes, where she discovered her passion for ceramics, later pursuing a master's degree in contemporary ceramics at La Cambre in Brussels. Guilleman's work draws inspiration from landscapes spanning Brussels, Brittany and Greece, which continually inform her creative directions. Through her sculptural ceramic works, she consistently explores the boundaries between organic forms and constructed environments.

*Fury*

Laureates have been selected by a panel of leading figures including Anaïs Sandra Carion (Managing Director, MAD Brussels), Axelle de Buffévent (Global Culture and Creative director, Pernod Ricard), Jean-Marc Dimanche (Co-director, ceramic brussels), Vincent Lieber (Conservator, Nyon Historical and porcelain museum) and Vittoria Matarrese (Curator and director, Bally Foundation).



Untitled (2024), Raphaël Emine  
Courtesy Raphaël Emine. Objets Pointus. ceramic brussels



# ROMA

*Éclairons les esprits, Marion Flament*

Courtesy Romero Paprocki, ceramic brussels



## CERAMIXED-MEDIA

Mixed media ceramics is an ascendent position, as contemporary ceramic artists stretch the medium beyond its ancient roots to express something essential about our time.

When visitors arrive at ceramic brussels 2025, one of the first sights they will encounter is an installation in the entrance by American ceramic artist Elizabeth Jaeger [see p.34]. The guest of honour at the fair, Jaeger is on the vanguard of the field of mixed media ceramics. She specialises in lifelike representations of people and animals. Her works are made out of clay, but what they initially express are not things normally associated with the medium, such as surface qualities or the marks of the human hands that made them. Rather, it's an assortment of deep emotions that they express: the want for approval in the eyes of a dog; vigilance in the stare of a crow; a mix of fear and hope on the face of a woman in an erotic embrace.

We connect with these works on a visceral level, beyond materiality and aesthetics. The emotional impact can be so strong that even after people realise Jaeger is working in ceramic, it may never become apparent how many other mediums she brings into her process. Yet, for Jaeger, the distinct sensual qualities those other mediums express are an essential part of her quest to convey life through objects that are not alive. The vulnerability and malleability of wax; the strength, coldness, and reflectivity of metals; the rooted, organic earthiness of wood. Jaeger demonstrates how mixed media is in fact a single gesture — a way of making art where no aspect of the work can be separated from the rest.

Jaeger is hardly the only artist at ceramic brussels who embraces mixed media. Half of the fair's 2025 art prize [see p.46] laureates bring other

materials into their practice. Éléonore Griveau blends electronics with her ceramics to create objects and installations viewers interact with. These works are intended to create bridges between the past and the future, blending the heritage of ceramics with a spirit of contemporary exploration. "Clay, with its raw qualities, anchors my work in the materiality of the natural world," Griveau says. "It recalls the texture of rocks, the density of the earth and the wear and tear of time. It is also incredibly versatile and adapted to modern technologies. 3D printing, experimental enamels from recovered materials and the integration of electronic sensors expand the possibilities."

Griveau's work *PRODROME II* employs CO<sub>2</sub> sensors to capture the breath of people in its presence. That data, she says, "triggers vibrations that crumble porcelain, symbolising environmental degradation." By setting up a circumstance in which the viewers of her art transform the artworks to the point that



Intercontainers, Javier Carro Temboury  
Photo Salim Santa Lucia. Courtesy Romero Paprocki



### *Theaster Gates at LUMA Arles*

Theaster Gates is among the most influential artists working today. He is primarily known for sculptures and installations constructed from reclaimed materials suggestive of social and political concerns, such as fire hoses, gymnasium floor boards, and domestic construction materials.

It is less known that Gates' artistic roots are actually in ceramics. He first studied the medium in college at Iowa State University, then studied traditional Japanese pottery techniques for a year in Tokoname, Japan. Since 2023, Gates has been re-visiting his relationship to clay through a long-term collaboration with LUMA Arles, an interdisciplinary creative campus in southern France where the stated mission is to give artists space to "question the relations between art, culture, environment, human rights, and research."

In his first year at the campus, Gates created an experiential installation called *Min | Mon*, which blended his interest in *mingei*, a Japanese movement that embraced everyday craft techniques, and the American Black is beautiful movement. The installation's core was a gathering space called *The temple*. It featured a DJ booth stocked with vinyl records Gates brought from Chicago, and a bar that served a brand of sake Gates developed in collaboration with the Tokoname-based Hakurou company.

Now in his second year at the campus, Gates has expanded *The temple* to include a pottery studio where he and other craftspeople come together to craft pottery, including a full-scale Japanese kiln where the pottery is fired. Gates calls the environment *Le chant du centre*.

"The exhibition is an attempt by me to articulate what a full sculptural practice looks like, or maybe what my life as an artist looks like." Gates says. "It is this complex production where the studio sometimes feels like a theatre or a stage, and the living room sometimes feels like a political office. The whole thing realises itself not only as a place of creative activity but also emotional activity, social activity, political activity."

in objects that are mobile, wearable, and capable of producing sound.

"I put forward the idea that ceramics can offer an auditory and sensory dimension that interacts with the viewer's experience," Bersanetti says. "What particularly interests me is the relationship to movement. My practice consists of reinventing ceramics in various forms, and considering its possibilities not only as a static material, but also as a living material, in interaction with the body. I try to build connections through various mediums that we are not used to seeing together."

Maëlle Dufour combines ceramics with liquids and living organisms to explore issues related to the destruction of ecosystems. She chose the ceramics medium for the freedom of form it offers her, as well as for how freely it allows itself to be incorporated with other mediums. She also appreciates the historical symbolism the medium implies. Symbolism is integral to her intention of using her work to address crucial issues facing contemporary society. "In my installations, I question new technologies while exploring the precious knowledge and material legacies of ancient societies," Dufour says. "I explore the traces of decadence, the beginnings of hope and the processes of renewal, thus reflecting on the evolution of humanity." For example, her work *Jusqu'ici tout va bien* (2022) places rounded ceramic vessels, which look like the sawed off bottoms of bombshells or barrels, atop metal pillars. Organic matter placed inside the vessels corrodes the ceramics, a process which will eventually also threaten the underlying supports.

they destroy themselves, Griveau highlights the darkness inherent in humanity's environmental impact. This aspect of her practice, she says, "explores the transition to a post-humanist era, illustrating how our perception of bodies and materials evolves in the face of technological advances."

Luna-Isola Bersanetti combines ceramics with textiles and performance to explore historical

narratives related to women. In her early interactions with ceramics, she says she liked its expressive qualities but found it "too rigid." Her research focused on ways to bring more conceptual and literal flexibility into the medium. "My practice has therefore evolved towards a dialogue between ceramics and textiles," she says. She combines the two materials through sewing, knitting, mesh and weaving. This process results

We are witnessing a growing trend among artists to explore interdisciplinary practices, blending ceramics with materials such as textiles, bronze, metal, etc.  
— *Jean-Marc Dimanche*

Dufour says the work “was inspired by the toxic shells submerged in the North Sea at the Paardenmarkt.”

Raphaël Emine creates terracotta vessels that are intended to house organic forms of life. The initial formation of the vessels themselves could be considered only the first phase of the work’s existence. As organic fluids, and inhabited by insects, bacteria, and other living organisms interact with the terracotta vessels, the vessels become integrated into the natural environment and the lifeforms become collaborators in the work’s evolution. The multimedia aspects of the work are expressed by those interactions, as the sculpture or installation becomes what Emine calls an “interspecies device activated by non-humans.”

Even the other laureates who may not directly introduce other mediums to their ceramic works either meld their ceramic works into a larger multidisciplinary practice, or they finish their pieces with unexpected or untraditional surface treatments. Sometimes even something as expected as painting the surface of a ceramic work could be done in such a way that it crosses over from something ordinary to something avant-garde. It depends how it is done. Consider Flemish sculptor Johan Creten, who was invited as the guest of honour for the first edition of ceramic brussels in 2024. Creten

began his artistic evolution as a painter in the 1980s.

After he discovered clay at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent, he began adding ceramic elements to his paintings. He later flipped that equation, creating ceramic works to which he added layers of paint. Creten approaches the interplay of the two mediums in such a way that he is not described as someone who simply paints his ceramics, but rather his work is said to “blur the boundary between painting and sculpture.”

Regardless of their specific approach, what all of these artists have in common is an interest in taking ceramics into an expanded conceptual realm. Art historians might say this impulse has its roots in, or is the inevitable result of, other kinds of interdisciplinary art that have grown in popularity in recent decades, such as installation art, multi-media art, or social practice art. Theaster Gates, a self-described social practice artist who is currently involved in a multi-year collaboration with LUMA Arles [see box p.57], might add that it has to do with a uniquely contemporary desire to take ceramics beyond the realm of aesthetics, into the realm of the human psyche. As part of his installation at Arles, Gates built a large-scale, functioning ceramic studio that includes a Japanese kiln. He and other artists converge there daily, along with exhibition visitors. They make ceramic artworks together then fire them in the kiln while listening to vinyl records Gates brought from his home in Chicago, which are playing in a DJ booth Gates built out of pieces of his past installations.

Gates describes his exhibition in Arles as “this complex production where the studio sometimes feels like a theatre or a stage, and the living room sometimes feels like a political office. The whole thing realises itself not only as a place of creative activity but also emotional activity, social activity, political activity.” It is in that multi-media, and multi-purpose zone that ceramics can take on additional levels of meaning in the minds of people who interact with them. The artists who work in that zone are striving to express something about the human condition, something hard to define.





O T Fadenschein #3 (2024), Helena Hafemann



# WILHELM



Musée Ariana



## CERAMICS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Europe is home to several of the world's most significant public ceramics collections. The research projects and exhibitions initiated by these institutions play an important role in determining how the ceramics medium is perceived by the wider culture.

Cité de la Céramique, in the city of Sèvres in the Parisian suburbs, houses one of Europe's most prestigious ceramic collections. The Cité was created when the world's oldest fine ceramic arts museum — the Musée national de Céramique-Sèvres — merged with the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, one of the most important European porcelain factories. The museum's collection consists of around 50,000 objects from Europe and Asia, including pottery, glazed ceramics, stoneware, and porcelain.

The Manufacture at Sèvres occupies a special place in the story of the development of French ceramic expertise. It was established in 1740, not originally at Sèvres, but in the so-called “Tour du Diable” (“Devil’s Tower”) of the Château de Vincennes, a vacated royal palace. It was originally suited for the manufacture of “soft-paste” porcelain, a weaker type of porcelain than the hard-paste variety typically made in China, which requires a type of clay called kaolin.

Once the first French deposits of kaolin were discovered in Limoges, the Manufacture pivoted. Taking advantage of newly published secrets of Chinese porcelain techniques, it undertook groundbreaking experiments and research that led to the French being able to produce true hard-paste porcelain for the first time. The Manufacture moved to Sèvres in 1756, and today about a tenth of the items in the collection of Cité de la Céramique museum were locally manufactured.

Thanks to the residency programme launched in the early 2000s under the leadership of then-director David Caméo, Cité de la Céramique has become a platform for contemporary art and design. The programme invites artists to deeply engage with the medium, allowing them to develop unique pieces and experiment with the boundaries of ceramics. Residents are provided with technical and material resources, as well as access to art technicians, enabling the realisation of complex projects. The program debuted with Johan Creten, and since then, an array of artists and designers have participated, including Louise Bourgeois, Pierre Soulages, Fabrice Hybert, Lee Ufan or Ronan Bouroullec. This transformation of the former Royal Manufactory into a dynamic research and laboratory for ceramic art, has been a resounding success. By marrying tradition with innovation, Cité de la Céramique preserves the legacy of ceramics while redefines the medium for contemporary artistic expressions.





Ludovic Recchia

Photo Odessa Malchair. Courtesy Keramis

The crown jewel of Switzerland's ceramic collections is held by the Musée Ariana in Geneva. Established in 1884, it boasts a collection of nearly 30,000 objects from Europe and Asia. The museum was the life's work of Gustave Revilliod, who bequeathed the building, its grounds, as well as the museum's initial collection to the City of Geneva when he died in 1890. The collection spans around 1,200 years of history. Among its most notable assets is a large assortment of blue and white Chinese porcelain, made from kaolin clay and cobalt oxide.

D<sup>r</sup> Claire FitzGerald, the Musée Ariana's Chief Curator, says that preserving the heritage of ceramics, both in terms of the evolution of techniques and the global circulation of knowhow, has always been at the heart of the institution's mission. But since 2010, that mission has also been coupled with an active interest in the production of contemporary ceramics. "This turning point invested in the notion of the medium as a space for artistic creation," D<sup>r</sup> FitzGerald says.

In addition to supporting contemporary ceramics production, the Musée Ariana is undergoing a curatorial shift that, according to D<sup>r</sup> FitzGerald, will reconstitute ceramics and glass "as supports for reflection around the social issues of our time, with a transversal and transhistorical approach to the collections." This change is important, she believes, because public institutions have an opportunity, and perhaps a responsibility, to help contextualise the meaning and values inherent within the artistic mediums they defend. The choice to elucidate the medium's social relevance relates to

D<sup>r</sup> Fitzgerald's "wish that ceramics free itself from the compartmentalizations linked to the notion of medium and become integrated in a lasting manner into the broader landscape of contemporary artistic production."

Besides serving as a significant platform for ceramic and glass art, the museum actively supports contemporary ceramists through several initiatives, including exhibitions, research opportunities, and archive resources. The institution also hosts temporary exhibitions, giving visibility to contemporary creations. Recently it showcased works by Laurin Schaub and is currently presenting "Post Tenebras Lux", until April 2025. This exhibition brings together international artists that play with contemporary ceramic and glass art, reflecting transitions, renewal, and the interplay between light and shadow. In addition, the museums collaborates with the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC), headquartered at the museum since 1973. This partnership provides a rich resource for artists and researchers to explore the medium. The IAC also organises events such as congresses and exhibitions, promoting international exchange and collaboration among ceramic professionals.

In the Netherlands, the Princessehof Ceramics Museum welcomes visitors to a complex of historic buildings in the northern city of Leeuwarden. Housed in the buildings are around 35,000 ceramic objects spanning nearly 5,000 years of history. The museum's name comes from the legacy of one of the structures as the 18<sup>th</sup> century home of Marie Louise of Hesse-Kassel, princess of Orange-Nassau,

and matriarch of the royal family. Another one of the buildings, curiously, also happened to be the birthplace of the artist M.C. Escher.

In addition to the Princessehof's Chinese porcelain collection, which is the largest in the Netherlands, the museum has a notable selection of objects representing Dutch Art Nouveau and Art Deco, and a rare, glazed ceramic sculpture by 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch master Karel Appel. It also holds a rare and substantial collection of Middle Eastern ceramics. Some of the Middle Eastern items date to the pre-Islamic period, before 600 CE. Others date to the height of Iranian ceramics, from around 1100 to 1400 CE. There are examples in this collection of works created using the "minai" technique, which involves painting a glazed object with colored pigments and then refiring it. Also notable is the Princessehof's collection of Middle Eastern ceramic wall tiles. Islamic tradition prohibited figurative wall decorations such as murals depicting people, animals, and nature scenes, which led to sophisticated developments in the field of abstract ceramic wall decorations. The Princessehof's collection includes numerous excellent examples of such tiles manufactured in the areas of modern day Turkey and Iran.

The museum organises temporary exhibitions, workshops, and artist collaborations that utilise its extensive collection as an inspiration for new works. Projects such as *Human after all* (2021) and partnerships with contemporary creators like Meekyoung Shin, demonstrate innovative uses of the medium, fostering a dialogue between

Today, the practice of ceramics in schools of art remains the weak link in the development of a contemporary artistic practice of ceramics. Through their classes and workshops, Keramis is striving to play a role in the future of the medium by filling some of these gaps.

— *Ludovic Recchia*

historical and modern artistic practices. Additionally, the museum runs educational programs and lectures that invite the public to explore the relation between cultural heritage and contemporary expression. This blend of historic Chinese porcelain with contemporary arts, reinforce the museum's commitment to ceramics as a dynamic medium of artistic innovation and research. Current exhibition "Oracles from far and near", open until October 2025, brings together the latest acquisitions of the museum, including works by Yoann Estevenin and Michel Gouéry, both featured in the first edition of ceramic brussels.

Another innovative ceramics museums is Keramis Centre de la Céramique in La Louvière, Belgium. The institution is housed in a decommissioned factory that once made faïence, a form of glazed ceramic ware, for the Royal Boch ceramic company. Its museum holds a substantial collection of objects created by Boch during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is also in possession of the collections of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the SRIW and the Province of Hainaut. But history is not the only thing the museum is interested in. It actively collects ceramic works by contemporary artists, designers and craftspeople. And perhaps most importantly, the institution is dedicated to educating the public on ceramics history and techniques. It operates a workshop on site for that purpose, which hosts contemporary ceramic artists in residence.

The educational component of Keramis was highlighted in 2024 when the museum teamed up with BeCraft, an artist collective that operates out of the Anciens Abattoirs in Mons, Belgium, to create an exhibition called "Mentors". Simultaneously hosted by both sites, "Mentors" showed the work of around 70 Belgian teaching ceramicists. The exhibition was the perfect expression of Keramis's educational mission, according to Ludovic Recchia, its Managing Director and curator. "Today, the practice of ceramics in schools of higher art remains the weak link in the development of a contemporary artistic ceramics practice," Recchia says. Through their classes and workshops, the Keramis museum and art centre is striving to play a role in the future of ceramics by filling gaps created by blind spots in traditional educational facilities.

#### Art fairs as institutions

In addition to his role at Keramis, Recchia is also on the advisory board of ceramic brussels. As such, he was part of the team that determined who would exhibit at the fair. In this capacity, he has experienced first hand the impact a platform such as an art fair can have on the development of a particular artistic medium, especially in the commercial sector.

"Being the only fair dedicated to this field, ceramic brussels appears to be a particularly interesting laboratory of the interest of galleries in ceramics," Recchia says. "I would define the selection as eclectic given

that ceramics today are a universal plastic response to a wide diversity of artistic approaches." Eclecticism is important, he believes, because it demonstrates the balance that exists right now between historical interest and contemporary developments.

The most current contemporary development Recchia sees is in the work of artists trained in art schools, a new wave which he says is dominated by "figurative and narrative sculpture... with an uninhibited use of colour." Enamels are also popular with this new generation of artists, he says, "However, the mastery of enamels sometimes fails among certain people due to lack of knowledge and perspective on what they do." Recchia also notices an enthusiasm for earth materials, which he suspects "characterises our era of hyper communication promoted by social networks."

Finally Recchia perceives greater interest today in plastic sensibilities, with artists expressing themselves more through form and materials than by following a particular historic or technical thread. "The ideas behind [these works] relate more to a sensible thought than to a purely conceptual thought, which is not problematic," Recchia says. "As an artistic programmer of a place with a vocation both as a museum and as an art centre, I distinguish the product of history from what is happening before our eyes. I defend the idea that ceramics is only a means of expression and that technology should never be an end in itself."





Photo Nicolas Héron. © Sèvres

# MARRIAGE



*Cavalier box* (1960), Jean Derval

Courtesy ARTRIUM. ceramic brussels

## A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE CERAMICS MARKET

The market for ceramics has expanded significantly in recent decades, transforming a realm once dominated by pottery and decorative crafts into a world of vanguard ceramic artists who are expanding the limits of the field.

Galleries dedicated to ceramic arts are flourishing today. At the same time, contemporary art dealers in the general market who once rarely thought of representing a ceramicist are now competing to include blue chip ceramic artists on their rosters. Museums, meanwhile, are regularly formulating major exhibitions devoted to the ceramics medium. And prices for singular ceramic pieces regularly come up at auction, and fetch seven digit prices.

What is fuelling this significant increase in the ceramics market? Some say it was the pandemic, which caused everyone to slow down and take a fresh look at the handmade arts. But the truth is that the market has been building slowly and steadily for more than a century. Cutting edge artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Auguste Rodin and Paul Gauguin were perhaps the first to demonstrate that there was a market for ceramic art that went beyond ancient pottery and decorative crafts. Matisse also famously added ceramics to his vast oeuvre, as did Georges Braque and Joan Miró.

Then of course there is perhaps the most famous example of a Modern artist embracing ceramics, when Picasso made his foray into the medium. Already world famous at the time, Picasso visited the French commune of Vallauris in 1946. Vallauris is located on France's southeastern coast, and is rich in a type of sedimentary soil known as fireclay. Potters have been drawn to the local geography since Roman times, giving the town a 2,000-year reputation as a centre for ceramics mastery. Picasso came there to visit a local ceramics fair,

where he encountered the work of Suzanne and Georges Ramié, the proprietors of the Madoura ceramics studio. The Ramiés had moved to Vallauris in 1938, and were known for their dedication to craft and technique. Picasso was so impressed with their work that he moved to the town, and ultimately created more than 3,500 ceramic objects at the Madoura studio. Other famous artists of the time, including Marc Chagall and Victor Brauner, followed his lead and came to Vallauris to create their own artworks out of the local clay.

The works of those and other Post War French artists are what many collectors and dealers believe spurred a fundamental change in the ceramics market around the early 2000s. Thomas Fritsch, whose ARTRIUM gallery will show fine examples from the period at ceramic brussels, says that change was spurred in part by fresh research in a book by Pierre Staudenmeyer called *La céramique française des années 1950* (*French ceramics from the 1950s*). A former mathematical researcher who







*Untitled* (1950), Pablo Picasso

Photo Cecil Mathieu. Courtesy HELENE BAILLY. ceramic brussels

changed careers to become a design dealer at age 29, Staudenmeyer ran Galerie Neotu for two decades. His book, which became a standard reference in the field, made people look at Post War ceramics differently than they previously had.

In Eastern cultures, Fritsch points out, ceramics have always been respected as both art and design. But in Europe this was not always true. When those Modern and Post War European artists took a fresh look at the medium, it was considered very forward thinking. Says Fritsch, “All these pieces, they were created in a contemporary way at the time.” Maillard’s book,

Salomé de Bryas of the HELENE BAILLY gallery in Paris agrees. The gallery will present a selection of Picasso’s ceramics at ceramic brussels 2025, and de Bryas says the institutional demand for such items is growing because of so many exhibitions around the world. “The number of exhibitions devoted to the medium is increasing and becoming more international,” she says. “We can think of the ‘Rodin-Picasso’ exhibition at the Picasso Museum in 2022, but the NSU Art Museum in Florida in the United States also devoted an exhibition to it in 2016, just as the Royal Delft Museum in the Netherlands hosted the ‘Picasso magic ceramist’ exhibition until May this year.”

stuff of legends. The sculpture rises three storeys high, and is covered inside and out by ceramic tiles manufactured by Portuguese ceramic manufacturer Viúva Lamego. A near-perfect replica of a traditional wedding cake, it expresses an intricate range of messages that are important to the artist and her culture. It also holds a special place on the Rothschild Foundation grounds, a place previously known more for its ancient ceramics collection than for a contemporary masterpiece such as this.

Even makers of non-monumental contemporary ceramic art are experiencing great creative freedom thanks to this market evolution.

“All those modern pieces were very contemporary at the time of their creation.

— Thomas Fritsch

he says, created a new market where those once-vanguard artist’s ceramic works were treated less like decorative art, and were treated more like rare and valuable antiques. This change has resulted in new auction records, such as with Picasso’s *Le hibou gris*, a 34.7 cm high painted ceramic sculpture from 1953, which recently sold at Christie’s for €2.3 million.

Fritsch also credits the increased interest in 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramics to recent institutional exhibitions. “There was an exhibition which took place at the Vallauris museum in 2018 or 2019 which was called ‘Vallauris, the workshop town’, where all the ceramists of Vallauris were truly represented,” Fritsch says. “You had exhibitions in Bourges and La Borne. You currently have an exhibition of French ceramic artist Mado Jolain at La Piscine museum in Roubaix. You have monographic exhibitions at the Saint Quentin la Poterie every year. All that contributes, if you like, to knowledge.” [see p.60]

Other 20<sup>th</sup> century artists who always specialised in the medium, such as Jean et Jacqueline Lerat and Valentine Schlegel, have also seen their market exponentially expand. Such artists reflect a fundamental shift wherein artists no longer see ceramics as solely a craft or design tradition, or as something that could be added on to an already successful painting or sculpture career, but as a unified and respected medium through which a full range of contemporary concepts and concerns could be expressed.

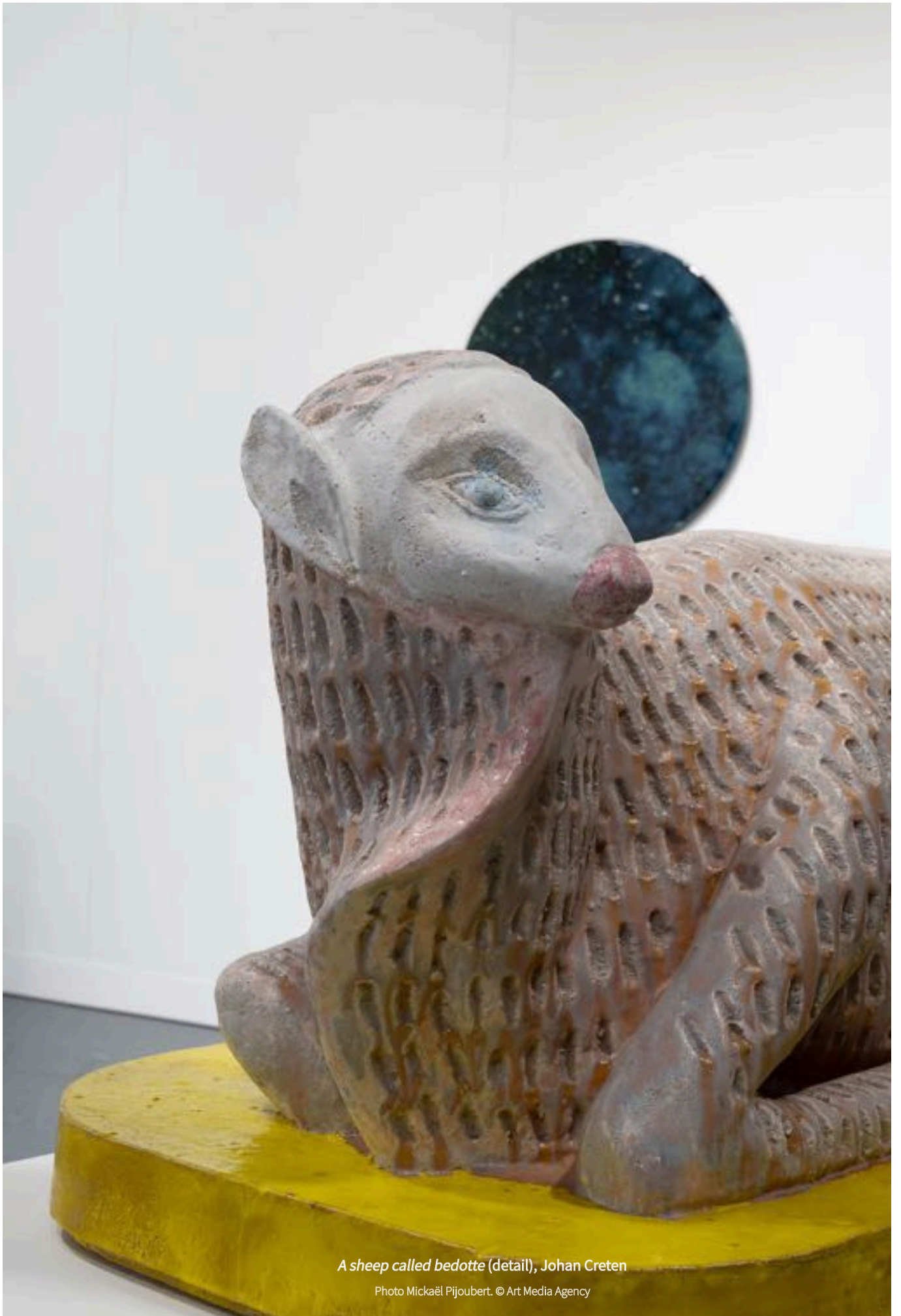
#### The market for contemporary ceramics

With institutions and private collectors taking the medium more seriously, that means ceramic artists today can feel free to dream big and be experimental. One of the biggest dreamers right now is Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos. In 2023, she made a monumental, 12-meter-high ceramic sculpture titled *Wedding cake* for the Rothschild Foundation that has become the

German artist Thomas Schütte is largely known for his large scale metal sculptures, which can bring several millions of euros at auction. His smaller ceramic works are raw and emotive, demonstrating an exuberance and energy that sets them apart from Schütte’s larger works. Although they may not yet command the same prices as his larger sculptures, they can easily attract buyers in the €200,000 to €400,000 range.

One of the key reasons contemporary ceramics is catching up so quickly with the market for other mediums has to do with its potential to express complex social ideas that are more and more important to artists and collectors alike. Artists also no longer feel beholden to past academic or cultural notions of beauty, history, or craft. And they can ignore the plastic qualities of ceramics entirely, and focus only on its embedded conceptual layers, which relate to a number of social, political,





*A sheep called bedotte* (detail), Johan Creten

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

and material concerns. German ceramic artist Anne Wenzel has leveraged this change to interrogate one of the most pressing issues of our time, the intersection of power and destruction. Her harrowing ceramic tableaus are prized by institutions and private collectors alike, and are in the collections of more than a dozen influential contemporary art museums, including Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Frac Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, and S.M.A.K., Gent.

“This trend is imbued with multifaceted layers,” says Zsolt Miklósvölgyi, curator at acb Galéria, Budapest. “[It is] intertwined with the global realignment, and burgeoning thematic interests in notions of land, nature, femininity, and the epistemic paradigms and cultural practices of non-Western societies. These themes, along with their associated formal and material qualities, are enmeshed within contemporary artistic valuation frameworks and theoretical and curatorial discourses, encompassing dominant narratives of postcolonialism, indigenous perspectives, and queer and feminist liberation.”

In Hungary, Zsolt says, the phenomenon of artists embracing ceramics as one part of their multidisciplinary practice started during “the interwar avant-garde period” and expanded in the 1960s and 1970s. That era is the period the gallery is focusing on in its presentation at ceramic brussels, with works by Lajos Csertő, Victor Vasarely, László Borsódy, and Judit

Vida. Zsolt says those late 20<sup>th</sup> century artists inspired Hungarian artists of today to mobilise ceramics to respond to contemporary international art trends. “They treat ceramics as an equally valid and versatile medium, comparable to painting, sculpture, new media, or conceptual art genres,” he says. “Their work often explores the full potential of ceramics without the historical burden of opposition to ideological constraints.”

What is happening in Hungary is also true around the world, so that it is normal today for an artist who has never worked in the medium before to suddenly include ceramic works in their exhibition or installation. It is equally normal for collectors to perceive ceramics as on par with any other fine art medium. No longer are ceramics perceived as functional design objects, accessories, or esoteric treasures for the initiated few. They possess the same conceptual heft, and market status, as painting and sculpture.

This is a welcome change for Laurence Bonnel, who founded SCENE OUVERTE gallery in Paris precisely to showcase objects that challenge inherited definitions separating fine and decorative art. Bonnel believes such designations have less to do with what we as viewers think about the objects, and more to do with what was in the mind of the person who made them. For example, she cites the artist Sarai Delfendahl, who she says “works first on the form, then on the enamels as if it were a painting. Her work is completely in the realm of plastic arts.” That is opposed to Rino Claessens, who Bonnel says “works on furniture in ceramic modules. His thinking integrates a part of functionality which leads him towards decorative arts.” A viewer could easily confuse the work of either person as art or decoration.

Bonnel’s ideas tap into one of the key reasons why the ceramics market is in a golden age today: because so much of the rest of the world is catching up to the sensibility Chinese ceramicists have always had — and the sensibility that European artists like Picasso, Matisse, Chagall and Vasarely embraced in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century — that the ceramics medium uniquely represents a perfect melding of art and craft. Its value and its meaning depend not only on how it is made, but “on the thinking which is at the origin of the work,” Bonnel says. “Artists seek to go beyond the limits they know.”



tbc, László Borsódy

Courtesy acb Galéria, ceramic brussels



# FEARLESS





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## THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

As GREENART, a European project dubbed The future of cultural heritage conservation, enters its third year, partners are making progress, facing challenges and visualising the project's future.

GREENART launched in Athens, Greece, on 5 October 2022. It was intended as a three-year project to develop and promote new ecologically sensitive methods of restoring and conserving cultural heritage. At GREENART's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Consortium Meeting at the University of Ljubljana this past November, partners from across the world shared updates on their mission. According to organisers, the meeting "reinforced the power of collaboration and innovation in safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage while promoting sustainability."

Professor Piero Baglioni, an Italian chemist and University professor at the University of Florence, also offered insights into the project's future. Baglioni stressed the importance of continued collaboration between the project's partners, who are actively engaged in testing the innovations that have come out of the project so far.

Based on the findings presented at the meeting, the past year has produced significant gains towards more environmentally friendly tools, products and methods. Among the many topics addressed at the meeting were green cleaning systems, environmentally safe protective coatings, green consolidants and sustainable packaging materials as well as progress in dissemination, exploitation and communication of GREENART's work.

### **Green cleaning fluids**

A wide variety of green cleaning fluids, hydrogels and microemulsions have been developed by GREENART's project partners. These products are vital for the safe and controlled removal of

soil, dust and other detrimental layers from works of art. The goal is to replace existing adopted solvents with natural or bio-fluids. More than 10 new green cleaning fluids, four new hydrogels, and four new organogels were formulated by project partners in year one. Year two saw the development of additional products in all three categories as well as extensive assessment and testing of the products in real world examples.

Testing was conducted by an assortment of museums, collections and institutions collaborating in the project, and was conducted on a range of artefacts including canvas paintings, textiles, and sculptural objects made of stone, metal, ceramic and wood. In case examples involving three specific works — *Equilibrium* (1933-1934) by Jean Helion, *Untitled (composition, 1955)* by Tancredi Parmeggiani and *Croaking movement* (1946) by Jackson Pollock — modified PVA hydrogels displayed excellent cleaning capability. Gels with higher tortuosity were also found to perform better.

— *Phillip Barcio*

Green microemulsions were tested for cleaning efficacy compared to existing products. They were tested on Polaroid film on glass, vinyl polymers, acrylic polymers, natural resins and wax films (beeswax and paraffin) on glass. New PVA/Starch hydrogels were also tested for their ability to clean artworks, including assessments of molar mass variation, branching and solubility.

In the realm of new organogels, novel Polyester-enriched Castor oil polyurethanes were tested for their hydrophobicity. The organogels were tested on two oil on canvas easel paintings from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a polychrome wood sculpture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The goal of the test was to remove aged varnishes gradually with minimal impact on the paint layer. The test measured the practicality of removing varnish from the surface, the ease of preparation, the number of applications necessary, the ease of removing and rinsing the gels, the ease of application and efficiency of the varnish removal.

Tests showed that systems soaked in polar solvents (such as acetone and ethanol) are unsuitable for safely and precisely removing varnish from surfaces highly sensitive to these solvents. In contrast, organogels are more versatile and they enable a slow release of solvents, which, although softening the varnish layer more slowly than pure solvents, provides greater control and safety.

Tested hydrogels showed a disadvantage, with the varnish migrating poorly into the gel and swelling underneath. Testing on archeological metal objects revealed that cleaning with hydrogels resulted in better results with no residue compared to cleaning with cotton swabs. Less waste was also produced. Hydrogel testing is ongoing on a 19<sup>th</sup> century

sword belt and an 18<sup>th</sup> century Handstein. When tested on two 20<sup>th</sup> century, unvarnished oil paintings on canvas, green hydrogels effectively removed surface dirt, but in some cases caused stains to the back of the painting, indicating absorption by the canvas support. In some cases, minute areas of colour were also lifted from the support.

When tested on artworks on paper, micro-emulsions with green gels did not succeed in removing varnish without solubilising. Green cleaning gels and fluids were also tested for their ability to remove adhesives from paper samples without altering or damaging the paper surface, and without leaving residues. In all cases, the removal of the adhesive was minimal. In one case, pure cotton paper had planar distortions due to the moisture of the materials.

Additional testing of GREENART's green cleaning fluids and gels has been done and is still being conducted, on a range of other artefacts, including Tibetan polychrome wood furniture, the door soffit from the *Damascus Room*, a late 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian velvet panel, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Torah Ark Curtain, a bronze sculpture by Alberto Giacometti and Antonio Bellucci's *The adoration of the Magi* (c.1682). The action plan for the next six months also includes further testing and assessment by project partners, including the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

### Green protective coatings and consolidants

Protective coatings are added to the surfaces of artwork in order to stop the buildup of detrimental substances, while consolidants are utilised to mend, repair or hold together degraded elements of an artwork. Traditional protective materials are considered poor

in terms of their durability and sustainability. The objective of this part of GREENART's project is to develop multifunctional green protective coatings and consolidants to provide long term protection for works of cultural heritage from pollutants, humidity and other degradation or corrosion agents. They should be easy to use, transparent and removable. This will allow conservators to preserve the original appearance of substrates and will ensure the long-term stability of both coatings and protected surfaces.

Year two of the project saw the further development of sustainable protective polymer coatings made from bio-based monomers or waterborne polyurethane (WPU). Among other factors, these coatings are being tested for hardness and adhesion strength. In 2024, synthesis of bio-based WPU was achieved and investigation of its anticorrosive and self-healing properties is now underway. Sustainable protective polymer coatings from renewable polymers are also currently being developed and tested. In 2024, organo-modified chitosan coatings with transparency, hydrophobic phases, anti-corrosion modified-graphene oxide with water resistance, and anti corrosive properties were realised. Filler-based hybrid coatings with anticorrosive properties and nanofillers based on Arginine were also realised.

Real world case studies of these products have been performed on archaeological artefacts, including metal objects and ceramics. Preliminary results indicate that novel biopolymer coatings are easy to apply by brushing, their effect on treated surfaces is satisfying and they do not leave brush strokes while drying. After one year, partners at the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation of Venice found that the passive biopolymer coatings





David Chelazzi

Photo Pierre Naquin. © Art Media Agency









Photo Eugene Kuznetsov



maintained good stability inside. Results suggest that they can prevent the accumulation of dust and dirt particles on surfaces, however, since some alteration compounds were detected, a corrosion inhibitor may be needed.

Going forward, additional tests of new green protective materials are scheduled to be conducted, including testing of drying time, mechanical properties, VIS and UVL behaviour, SEM/EDS imaging and analysis and measurements of thickness, glossiness and colour.

In the area of consolidants, natural adhesives such as animal glue, wax, starch and resin have historically been used for consolidation in paintings, but are noted for their poor stability and performance. Synthetic adhesives can form a coating layer that can damage artworks. Their incompatibility with the original substrates can also result in poor outcomes including deterioration of the artwork. GREENART's objective is to develop green consolidants to strengthen fragile works of art and their supports. In years one and two, several families of consolidants with promising results for paint layer and support, including frames, stretchers and panels, have been developed, and a selection process identifying the best candidates is ongoing.

#### **Green packaging materials**

Conventional packaging materials for storing and transporting artefacts are unsustainable, hydrolysable, non-recyclable and have been found to insufficiently protect the objects. GREENART's objective is to develop green packing materials or foams for the safe storage and transport of these artefacts. In years one and two, several new packaging materials, multifunctional foams and enhanced replacement materials have been realised and

selection of the best candidates is ongoing. A wide and fully comprehensive set of case studies was identified in year two and artworks made from textile, metal, wood, stone and plastic are currently being evaluated.

Work was also performed in year two to extend the protective function of naturally aged archive boxes, including refurbishing them through spray deacidification. Virgin wood fibre content in archive boxes is being reduced, as materials with higher moisture barrier and better long-term stability and no VOC absorption are being tested. One of the challenges identified in this area in year two was that of gaining acceptance of new products within the conservation market. Acceptance will require high marketing efforts and enforcement will also be required to regulate bio-based materials and their purity.

Among the specific sustainable and multifunctional customised packaging solutions currently being developed and tested by the project is one to realise a customised packaging solution for *Box in a valise* (1941) by Marcel Duchamp. Scans of the object have been concluded to realise a packaging solution through 3D printing. Advanced Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs) are also being investigated.

#### **Dissemination, exploitation and communication**

It was noted at the meeting that GREENART's success is dependent on the project partners' ability to implement effective exploitation of innovations and to communicate and disseminate information and knowledge about the project's progress. That plan includes publications of scientific papers, dissemination of information to journalistic outlets and taking advantage of networking opportunities with other groups. As more parties become aware of the project, increased exploitation becomes possible as new partners innovate other possible uses for the project's technologies.

Under the supervision of Antonio Mirabile, whose role as the primary link between heritage institutions and scientific research has been instrumental in enhancing the project's impact and dissemination, year two saw tremendous growth in this area. GREENART project results were presented in 16 international conferences and 19 sectoral meetings, 20 dissemination articles focusing on topics related to the GREENART project were presented, 17 training events were organised during which the GREENART project was presented, 17 scientific publications have been produced and 6 others were submitted for publication. GREENART partners participated in multiple networking clusters with other like-minded groups of citizens, and a project video was created. Additional dissemination goals going forward include continued work on the project website, activations on the project's social media channels, participation in European and international conferences, and the publication of additional articles in various publications.





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