



ARTUR RAMON ESPAI D'ART

The art of emptiness

Contemporary ceramists

Josep Llorens Artigas, Corrie Bain, Carme Balada, Barbaformosa, Maria Bofill,
Claudi Casanovas, Ruth Cepedano, Roger Coll, Carme Collell,
Rosa Cortiella, Mia Llauder, Dameon Lynn, Madola,
Jordi Marcet i Rosa Vila-Abadal, Nuri Negre, Caterina Roma,
Joan Serra and Penélope Vallejo.

15.09.20 - 27.11.20



Josep Llorens Artigas, Vase, stoneware, 14 x 13 cm.

The Artur Ramon Gallery presents, with the exposition *The art of emptiness*, a chronological journey through the work of the most outstanding ceramists of the last decades, starting with Josep Llorens Artigas, father of contemporary Catalan ceramics.

In these works, the artists present their particular definition of the concept of emptiness, of the relationship of the material, the clay, with the space that contains or surrounds it. In fact, emptiness is a silent companion of ceramics throughout its history, which is also the history of humanity itself. As Lao Tzu wrote in his Taoist treatise in the 6th century BC: “The bowl is made of empty clay, and thanks to that void it fulfils its purpose [...]. So, that which exists serves to be possessed, and that which does not exist serves to accomplish its function.”

Thus, embracing that nothingness, ceramics made possible, until the arrival of plastic a little while ago, the technological and social development of humanity. The creation of the limits of the vacuum, the container, was a true revolution, since it allowed to transport, store and cook food.

However, what began in the Neolithic as a giant leap in the quality of life and the possibilities of social development continued to evolve throughout the centuries, refining and adapting to the aesthetic taste and needs of an increasingly sophisticated society. Although in ancient Egypt vases were already used for decorative purposes, it was in ancient Greece that the ceramic vessel became an object of infinite narrative and symbolic possibilities: ceramics was born, halfway between utility and *objet d'art*, symbol of the power of the elites. There was a normative form for each use, and the application of decorative elements allowed the development of historical, war, religious themes, etc. Therefore, the ceramic container became an artistic piece of the first order.

From then on, and throughout the centuries, ceramics has always been an everyday and utilitarian element; only a few times has it been considered a work of art. In fact, the more refined the culture, the more important the clay object was; investing in fragile objects was also a way of demonstrating power and wealth.

It has been said that in the Russian Empire of Nicholas I (1796-1855) the vase was the diplomatic gift par excellence. It was probably the first time that ceramics in the West were equated with the disciplines traditionally considered major arts.

In our society, increasingly conceptual and rich in metaphors, ceramics has inevitably evolved along the same path. The younger generation of ceramic artists uses clay as a material with also sculptural possibilities; beyond the purely functional, they maintain an unmistakable connection with oriental ceramics. Due to their long tradition of ceramics and porcelain, China and Japan are today inescapable references.

Nevertheless, ceramics does not completely move away from the vessel's legacy, from the container shape: it reinterprets it with new materials and creative options, giving it a place in our society. Unusual containers, incredible and precious forms play —now, openly— with emptiness, with nothingness. Far from the *horror vacui* of other times, in our society emptiness, shadow, and space have recovered their meaning in the collective imagination, and the pieces that we present allow us to reflect on that philosophical game.

The exhibition tour includes four generations of artists who have explored ceramics as the main means of expression. Although their work does not necessarily respond to the aesthetic canon of an era, it does allow us to see how ceramics has evolved from the moment it shed the exclusive legacy of tradition. Artists who began looking for new ways of expression through clay, towards the modernization of ceramics, with new practices and a contemporary look, exhibit their work alongside the younger generations, heirs to that legacy, who at the same time follow their own path of artistic inquiry: influences, inspirations and reverberations that resonate in the fullness of the void.

Caterina Roma



“The Seed Pod Collection”, inspired by cymatics and made of Limoges porcelain, represents microscopic images of seeds, microorganisms, pollen and fractals. I like to define the works in this series as “capsules of life”.

Corrie Bain, *Larkspur*, porcelain, 47 x 52 x 39 cm.

I do not model my pieces; my job is to gather conditions for the shapes to appear. My aim is to obtain the maximum diversity in the treatment of clay and its consolidation in pieces that are the reflection of an instant, in which the anterior and posterior can be sensed as part of a process.



Joan Serra, *ME-PP-B1A3-17*, 2020, porcelain, 14 x 17,5 x 16 cm.

The volumes that are created with the potter's wheel are symmetrical, I subsequently manipulate the pieces to break the symmetry. I use porcelain for its softness and ductility, the chosen colours are neutral to be able to revalue the resulting shapes.



Isabel Barbaformosa, *Conjunt*, porcelain. Nearly 16 x 10 cm.

I make my ceramics using manual techniques, with refractory stoneware and patina of slips and oxides fired at 1250 °C in an electric oven. From its organic forms, each piece evokes nature and its vital drive that shapes matter.



Núria Negre, *Bulb II*, stoneware, 36,5 x 38 cm.

The Shedding Skin series represents the passage of time, the change and the evolution of our environment and of ourselves. Made with the potter's wheel, the final appearance is achieved by dressing the pieces with a skin, the porcelain. Delicate and brittle, it will break during firing—in a gas oven at 1260 °C—, showing the piece naked.



Penélope Vallejo, *Shedding Skin*, 2020, porcelain, 35 x 26,5 cm.

Most of my sculptures are “built”, not just modelled, not carved or sculpted. In my works, I use segments that I put together to create the final shape; using a repeated element to create something unique still fascinates me.



Roger Coll, *ARWH2001*, 2020, gres, 35 x 35 x 25 cm.



Carme Balada, *Utsuwa (A) y (B)*, refractory, 28 x 24 cm and 27 x 25 cm.

The pieces exhibited are an evocation of nature, both in the form and in the use of textures. They are made with refractory clay, using the potter's wheel technique, "churros" and various textures.

I feel the deep need to represent the things that surround me, reproducing them on a scale different from the actual one. I use refractory clay, as it is the one that best suits my working system. I paint the pieces with metallic oxides directly on the clay, and generally subject them to a single firing at a high temperature, 1280 °C. However, I fire them again at other temperatures as many times as I see fit until they are finished.



Madola, *Nança, Serie 30.000 anys d. C.*, 2016, gres, 44 x 35 x 50 cm.



Ruth Cepedano, *Ideas*, 2016, gres, 25 to 27 cm of diameter.

With these pieces, I have tried to create a plastic representation based on the concept of idea. With circular shapes, similar to the spiral and with a minimum supporting point on the surface, I have sought to convey a certain sensation of movement and lightness. Second runner-up in the 15th CERCO International Prize for Contemporary Ceramics 2017, Zaragoza.



Dameon Lynn, *Soldier Vase*, 2019, gres, 65 x 25 cm.

The life of my pieces begins on the potter's wheel, shaping a series of simple cylinders. I build my vessels, which will be fired at 1260 °C, using deconstruction techniques. Each finished piece represents a moment in time, a rhythmic dance with the materials.

Pieces made by hand using porcelain or chamotte clay. I fire them at a high temperature (1280 °C) and cover them with a delicate coat of enamel, oxides or colourants. The harmony in shapes interrelates my inner and outer world.



Maria Bofill, *Set of glasses*, porcelain.

I use the burnished slip technique, which allows me to paint and polish the pieces before subjecting them to a single firing process at 1080 °C. I am interested in exploring the relationship between volume and surface, between three-dimensional shape and colour.



Carme Collell, *Rosa cúbica en vermell*, 2002, terracotta, 20 x 20 x 24 cm.



Rosa Cortiella, *Vase*, gres, 22,5 x 27 cm

In my recent works, I am experimenting with painting. I treat surfaces as a support for colour with a wide chromatic range and unsophisticated materials, such as slip, without stridency of enamels or effects.

Pieces of wild clay, stoneware and porcelain fired in a wood kiln for 52 hours, unglazed, showing only ash and flame effects. A work done halfway with the natural elements: earth, water, air and fire.



Caterina Roma, *Vase*, porcelain, 31,5 x 10 cm.

The entire process of creating and developing our works is the result of teamwork. For us it is important to create sober sculptural forms, coupling small repetitive pieces and dressing the form with a drawn skin or with a multitude of fragments. In our productions, the shape, pattern and color are significant, leaving space for the white of porcelain or stoneware.



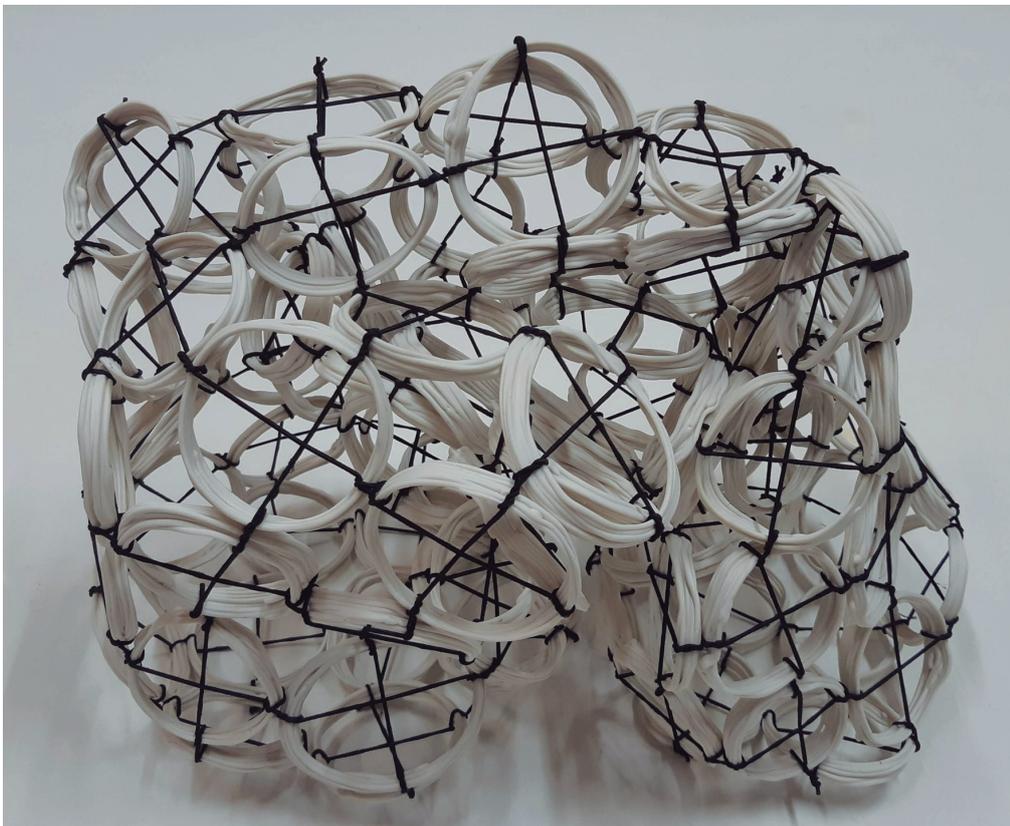
Jordi Marcet and Rosa Vila-Abadal, *Artèria il·lustrada*, 2016, porcelain, 29 x 29 x 29 cm.

The series that we present offers different versions on the theme of the bowl, the crucible, the mortar, with geological / archaeological evocations.
Technique: Stoneware 1280 °C.
Gas fired kiln. Clay mix.



Claudi Casanovas, *Oracle (1)*, 2020, gres, 20 x 24 cm.

Elements of a certain formal ambiguity make sense in the composition. By adding supports of non-ceramic materials (cords, fabrics, wires ...) it is possible to adapt and limit the spaces, a background to hold or a form of distribution until achieve a personal microcosm.



Mia Llauder, *Arandela i goma n°3*, 2020, porcelain and elastic, 60 x 25 x 25 cm.

Josep Llorens Artigas

(Barcelona 1892-1980)

Artigas is considered the most innovative ceramist of his generation. A student at the Galí Art School and the Superior School of Fine Crafts in Barcelona, he also stood out as an art critic at *La Veu de Catalunya*. In 1921 he travelled to Paris, where he settled two years later. There he came into contact with other Spanish artists, among them Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró, with whom he established a relationship of friendship and collaboration. In those years he made ceramics with Raoul Dufy, and in 1927 he exhibited in the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris the so-called “jardins de salon”, created in collaboration with Dufy and Nicolau M. Rubió Tudurí. He held solo exhibitions in Barcelona, Madrid, Paris, Brussels, London and New York. He received various awards, such as the honorary diploma of the Milan Triennial (1936) and the grand prize of the III Hispano-American Biennial of Art (1955).

Corrie Bain

(Caithness, Scotland, 1979)

Corrie Bain is an award-winning ceramic artist and professional sculptor from the United Kingdom. Born in Scotland and grew up on the island of Euboea in Greece, she studied ceramics at the Edinburgh College of Art and the Alfred University in New York. She lived in Korea, China, Japan, the USA and England, and has over than 30 years of experience in ceramics. For the last 10 years she has been based in Barcelona.

Carme Balada

(Barcelona 1957)

She studied ceramics at the Massana Art School in Barcelona. Then she realised different experimental courses, among which “Earth and magma” with the ceramist Claudi Casanovas and “Construction of kilns and experimental firings” in Girona, with the Hindu ceramist Wally Hawes who lives in Japan. Her last workshop is about experimentation of old photographic techniques over ceramic surface.

Barbaformosa (Isabel Barba Formosa)

(Barcelona 1947)

She graduated in Fine Arts in the University of Barcelona, a city where she has established her own workshops and where she lives. She is member of the Geneva International Academy of Ceramics. She is currently teacher at the Massana School of Art and Design in Barcelona. Inspired by traditional pottery, she usually creates objects which can be used as containers. Nevertheless, these objects often lose their functionality during the creative process. Porcelain is the material she best relates.

Maria Bofill

(Barcelona 1937)

She trained at the Massana school, where she taught from 1965 until her retirement in 2002. Bofill has a long career as a ceramist with exhibitions around the world and research stays at the main international ceramics research centres. Thus, she has been a guest lecturer at the Hammersmith College of Art and Building (London, England), Sunderland Polytechnic of Art and Design (Sunderland, England), Kyoto City University of Arts (Kyoto, Japan), Veracruz University of Xalapa (Veracruz, Mexico), Hartwich College in Oneonta (New York, USA), Triennale de la Porcelaine (Nyon, Switzerland), University of Haifa (Israel), European Ceramics Work Center (Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands), Atelier de Céramique Artistique Méditerranéenne (Hammamet, Tunis) and Siklos International Ceramics Symposium (Hungary), among others. She has been awarded in various competitions and her work is part of prestigious art collections.

Ruth Cepedano

(Barcelona 1972)

She started her relationship with artistic disciplines in 1992 by the way of image, through video and specially photography. Nevertheless, her professional activity developed out of the artistic field and she began to discover ceramics in 2007. Three years later, moved by the infinite possibilities that this field offers, she decided to start her artistic ceramic studies at Llotja school, in Barcelona, finished in 2013. She's been awarded with different international prizes and participated in various collective exhibitions in the Spanish territory.

Claudi Casanovas

(Barcelona 1956)

He first studied for the theatre in Barcelona, then trained as a ceramist in Olot (Catalonia). He was a member of the Coure Potters' Cooperative from 1978 to 1987. In 1985 he won the 2nd prize at the 43rd international Ceramic Competition in Faenza, Italy. In 1986 he won the Big Prize at the Vallauris Biennale in France. In 1992 he won the first prize at the III International Ceramics Competition in Mino, Japan. Since 1986 he lives and works in Riudaura, near Olot. The ceramics-sculptures of Claudi Casanovas introduce into a geological landscape. They "seem" basalt, granite rocks, just extracted from the volcanic setting in which the sculptor works. A basic work is the Monument to the War Defeat from 1939 in Olot.

Carne Collell

(Vic 1951)

She graduated in Art History at the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona. Thanks to a Fullbright scholarship, she completed a Master of Arts and Education at the New York University. There Lidya Buzio, a Uruguayan potter, introduced her to ceramics and encouraged her to continue her learning at the Collell Workshop in Montevideo. She learned an approach to pottery from the technique of the burnished engobe, which she has not abandoned since then. Josep Collell, his paternal uncle, painter and ceramist, began to develop this special technique when he entered the Torres García Workshop in Montevideo in 1950. She was a professor at the School of Art and Design of Vic and is member of the International Academy of Ceramics.

Roger Coll

(Badalona 1979)

He has studied Technical Architecture at ETSA La Salle University, Sculpture at EASD Llotja and Ceramics at Escuela Forma of Barcelona. In 2009 he obtained a sculpture scholarship from the Generalitat of Catalonia to work as an assistant to Jiri Geller in Helsinki. Upon his return, he began his personal Kraszna ceramic project.

Rosa Cortiella

(Barcelona 1965)

Graduated in Fine Arts, she works in the field of minimalism. Her work oscillates between spherical shapes made with casts and cubic ones. Among her artistic challenges, and always running from technical perfection, there is a search for the contrasts of light and colour. She finds solutions juxtaposing whites and blacks or helping herself to electricity to oppose obscurity. But, above all, she triumphs with the purity of the white of the clay, which she breaks up incrusting in her pieces small plastic sticks that confuse their serenity, but which give them contemporaneous nature.

Mia Llauder

(Mataró 1962)

She studied ceramics at the Escola Massana and Applied Arts at the Escola de la Llotja, she is a member of the Geneva International Academy of Ceramics. Her sculptures are shaped by the link of modules: the repetition of pieces of porcelain. Elements that have been made over the years, collected into a sample of basic units that the artist keeps in a drawer and concatenate, line up to write her stories. Recently the basic units have lost prominence to give way to the relationships that bind them. In previous pieces, the ties were subsidiary, imperceptibly white, as a base or support located behind, hidden inside the porcelain. Links were subject to the individual element. Now, on the contrary, they are the main reason. The color red has given them importance and generates lines connecting the primary elements, make a drawing.

Dameon Lynn

(Sunderland, United Kingdom, 1972)

Introduced to clay at primary school, he graduated from Cardiff University in 2001. In 2002 he began researching sculptural and modernist vessels, also developing natural monochrome surfaces and experimenting forms with ratios and scale. In 2012 he began working with wheel-thrown pieces, deconstructed-reconstructed vessels, creating forms with suggestions of function. Introduced to Anagama kiln in 2015, he develops clay bodies and experiment the effects of natural ash glazing.

Madola

(Barcelona 1944)

Pseudonym of Maria Àngels Domingo Laplana, she is known for its pieces of organic forms that combine tradition with contemporary and conceptual art. She starts working ceramics in 1960. She studied in Escuela Massana in Barcelona, Escuela del Trabajo and in Escuela de Artes y Oficios in Barcelona. She graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Barcelona, where she later received her PhD. She worked with the ceramist and sculptor Josep Llorens Artigas, who, with Gaudí, Picasso, Miró, Tàpies, were her references. She has had individual and collective exhibitions around the world and exhibit her works in numerous museums and also large format work in urban spaces. She has won prizes and awards such as the Special Ceramics Prize of Sotheby's London or the Pilar and Joan Miró Foundation of Mallorca.

Jordi Marcet

(Barcelona 1949)

He studied ceramics at the Massana School and the Eina school of design. He is currently president of the Association of Ceramists of Catalonia and member of the International Academy of Ceramics. Awarded by the Generalitat de Catalunya as Main Craftsman Ceramist, in recognition of the work in this specialty, he has exhibited mainly in Spain, Holland and Brazil.

Nuri Negre

(Girona 1971)

After finishing her career in psychology at the university, she worked as a counsellor. She began studying ceramics and art, such as painting and drawing, as a hobby. She took part in several collective exhibitions and won the first prize at a ceramic art competition. The motherhood made her realise what her real interests and ambitions in life were. She had the opportunity to start working with children, introducing them into the world of arts and crafts, inspired by the educational philosophy of Waldorf pedagogy.

Caterina Roma

(Lleida 1977)

Being a self-taught ceramist from a very young age has given her a rare freedom to create by intuition and observation. She's been able to explore the possibilities and limits of the materials without prejudice, judging by experience and following instinct. Digging her own clay, processing rocks and plants for glazing, and firing the pots in a wood-kiln is her way to touch the essential sensitivity of wild beauty. Shapes are deeply rooted in tradition, in ancient ceramics: simple and uneven forms thrown on a kick wheel, with a link to functionality and the primitive use of ceramics. The pots are fired continuously for days and nights, during which they are coated with volatilised melted ash, thick crusts develop, stones melt and surfaces crack. The natural process overlaps human creation.

Joan Serra

(Mataró 1962)

Graduated in Arts and Crafts, specialized in ceramics, he studied at the Pablo Gargallo school in Badalona. He is the director and teacher at the Ceramic School of the Museu del Càntir of Argentona, in charge for the educational activities of the International Ceramic Fair of Argentona and coordinator of the scientific committee. He is a member of the Association of Ceramists of Catalonia, of the International Academy of Ceramics of Geneva and Master Craftsman by the Government of Catalonia. He is a ceramist of the ceramic workshop Ixió, in which signature pieces are created with different processes to achieve objects that combine beauty and functionality.

Penélope Vallejo

(Santa Maria de Palautordera 1978)

Born near the mountain of Montseny, the close relationship with nature is a very important factor in her work. She started making ceramics when she was 7 years old, when she realised that playing with the earth, she could create volumes related with nature. Her university training initially passes through technical engineering of food industry, which would be useful to acquire a knowledge of physics and chemistry very helpful for the world of ceramics. To expand her knowledge in the artistic field, she studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts and make a ceramic itinerary in Japan, visiting Arita, Tokoname, Seto, Tokyo, Tajimi, Nara, Kyoto, Nagoya and Shigaraki.

Rosa Vila-Abadal

(Barcelona 1950)

She studied at the Massana school. She is responsible for the members of the ceramics promotion association of the Association of Ceramists of Catalonia and a member of the board of directors of the ACC. Awarded by the Generalitat de Catalunya as Main Craftsman Ceramist, in recognition of the work in this specialty, she has exhibited mainly in Spain, Holland, Taiwan and Japan.

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