



ROSARIO GUILLERMO (Mexico),
Nuestra Santísima Señora del Clitoris, 1990.
• Zacatecos clay, wood, 218 x 66 x 36 cm
(86 x 26 x 14 in). Photo: Lilian Stein.

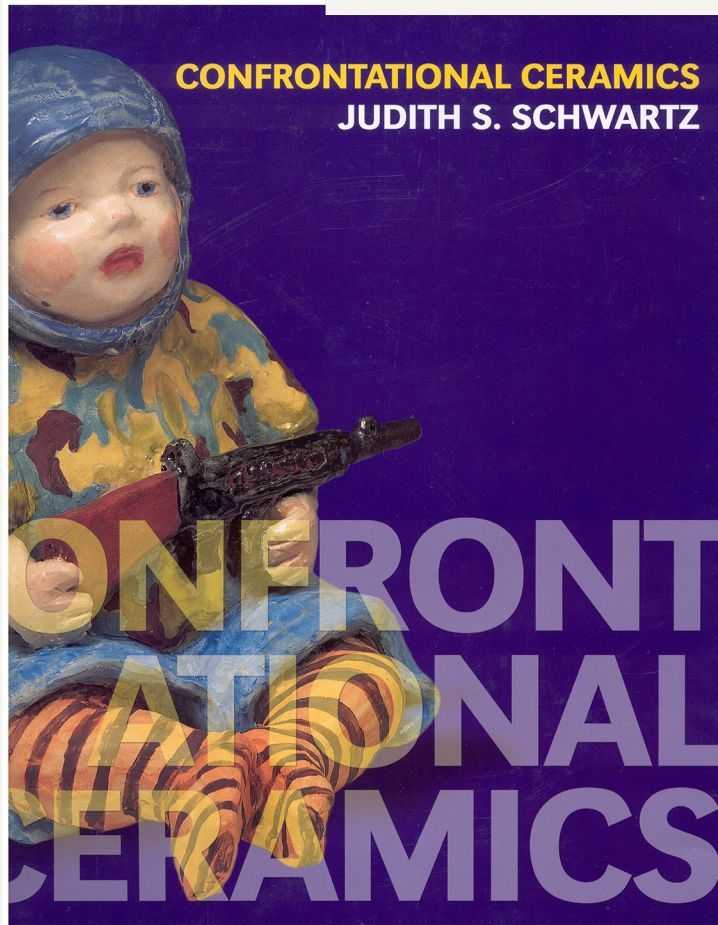
ROSARIO GUILLERMO My work reflects the severe moral and ethical Pre-Hispanic culture as well as the powerful and rigid Catholic influence under which the women of my country were raised.

The Mayan and Aztec goddesses are mighty and magnificent. They are the beginning of everything, of cosmic and human creations; they bore the gods. They are neither holy nor good, neither female, nor male; they are that much and more - they contain everything and run the universe. They are the opposite of the Virgins of the Catholic Church, who are gracious, protective and maternal. Nevertheless, the iconography of the saints of this religion is fascinating, in particular the forms of La Virgen de Guadalupe (the most important Mexican Virgin). In my sculpture these complex and apparently contradictory transcultural traits are present in the shapes and forms of the Catholic icons, mainly the Virgin of Guadalupe, yet they also convey the powerful character of the Aztec divinities.

Alongside these aspects, I believe that my work also projects my culture's inability to reproduce.

USA/ENGLAND

Gender Issues ■ 185



CHAPTER 3

GENDER ISSUES: Sexuality and psychosexuality – guilty pleasures and the return to the body

Clay is probably the sexiest material around. It can be worked soft but be made to look hard and, when hard, can be made to look soft. Its surface can be shiny, wet and glistening or coated with a 'skin' to resemble flesh. Its malleability can lead to organic shapes with voluptuous curves, or it can be worked with sandpaper and woodworking tools to yield the sharpest edges. Clay can be dark brown to exploit its scatological association, or it can be the purest luminescent white to rival the gossamer wings of angels.

There is no better material than clay to act as a metaphor for the human body, to speak about gender issues or to conjure up bodily functions. Even children playing with it sense its earthy organic qualities. There is hardly a toddler who does not refer to it as mud and, when given the slightest provocation, does not hesitate to revel in it.

Clay historians use anatomical terms like lip, neck, shoulder, belly and foot to refer to a vessel's parts and often equate concavity with the womb and spout with a phallus.

Women have fashioned clay talismans for ritual ceremonies – fabricating fertility figurines and goddesses.

In this section clay is fashioned into genitalia, dildo purses, vaginal slippers, S&M bondage apparatus and other sex toys. Clay is used to reveal perversions, erections, breasts, prostitution, sex trades, eroticism, bodily functions, body-image issues, seduction, censorship, copulation and homosexuality. The variety of the work attests to clay's continuing relevance as a subject matter for artists confronting issues relating to this, the most powerful and pervasive of human behaviours.