

Paula Acosta
Artist, Ceramist
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I was born in Bogota on May 6, 1970. As a little girl I fell in love with clay playing in a creek that crossed my childhood friend's ranch. I was the happiest when listening the song of the water, as we withdrew from the world amongst the shapes we were creating with the clay from the banks.

I got acquainted with ceramics at the University of the Andes in 1988 while completing my Bachelors in Art. Carol Young was the professor that inspired me the most to follow this path. Ever since, clay has been the preferred medium for my artistic exploration.

My thesis, titled "Thanatos' Eye", was composed of a series of urns made with clay mixed with a variety of other materials: glass, iron, paper, and ashes. I explored the concept of death and attempted to understand why this concept had been so closely tied to my artistic work since I was a teenager. During the creative process I worked closely with tools from the psychoanalytic field.

From 1990 I have worked with sculpture, murals, utilitarian pieces and some other that belong to all this worlds and transit through them. After graduating I started my first pottery business, "Espiral Ceramica", where I would produce my artistic work in parallel with some unique utilitarian pieces. With the latter I participated in various art exhibitions and several versions of Expoartesanas, the most important craft show in Colombia.

In 1996 I obtained an honorific mention at the II Ceramics Biennial with a handmade crockery for the "Served Table" category.

Simultaneously, with production work and participating in exhibitions, I would teach ceramics to children and adults. This experience grew in me as I became passionate about sharing knowledge, which, in my experience, creates an infinite spiral of learning. My sculptural shapes would adapt to the world of objects through lamps, boxes, furniture, and murals. "Prints of Light" was one of the series in which I explored light and shade with sculpted clay lamps supported by iron bases.

In 2009 I founded "Alharaca" together with Martha Patricia Mendoza. In this venture we mixed pottery and illustration creating tableware for kids. This project earned us a "Premio Traza" from Artesanias de Colombia in 2010. However, as many satisfactions and experiences as the project gave me my soul needed time and space to return to the shape, the sculpture the modeling of clay.

Since 2003 I have worked as an adjoined professor for the Department of Art at the University of the Andes in Bogota, thanks to the invitation I received from Carol Young, who was retiring from teaching at the time. Grateful and honored I took on the challenge of teaching ceramics at the university. My mission since has been to open a door for young people to get excited about ceramics, to invite them to get to know its origins and motivate them to respect the craft by identifying the endless possibilities for creation that it offers. I enjoy creating exercises and processes that allow each student to see their progress and have witnessed the therapeutic potential that transforming clay through water, air and fire have. At this university, my *alma mater*, I currently teach Basic Ceramics and Human Figure.

Together with Olga Lucia Garcia, ceramist and professor, we have traveled throughout Colombia with our students visiting the regions in which ceramics are part of the traditional cultural patrimony as Raquira, La Chamba, Guane and Carmen de Viboral.

Since 2018 I have been volunteering at the coordinating committee for the International Ceramics Meeting (ECAC). I participated in 2016 with one of my pieces and was impressed by the event as an important effort for creating and giving visibility to the community of ceramists, to allow for strengthening and growth through the creation of new connections around the world. I believed that if there were more universities linked to the event and the support for it grew it could have the resources necessary to further widen its horizons.

In October 2021 I was asked to become director of the Ceramics Workshop at the Creation Faculty of the Rosario University in Bogota. My work there involved organizing and putting together the first workshop of its kind in the university's main historic building. It's been a challenge that I have enjoyed greatly and has allowed me to work alongside professors in the fields of architecture, design and arts while guiding the students in the discovery of ceramics in a class that is transversal to all majors.

Since 2022 I proposed an elective class open to all students called Initiation into Ceramics. My position with the Rosario University allowed one of the ECAC's exhibitions to be held at the Creation Faculty and to invite Jose Ignacio Velez, one of the most important ceramists in Colombia, to talk to the students about his life and work.

I was able to participate in the organizational and curatorial duties for the exhibition and get to meet all the other participants and special guests like Ana de Felipe and Patty Wouters.

Luckily, working with universities has always allowed me to continue my experimentation in the sculpture field: thinking of new conceptual, technical, and formal challenges through an introspective exploration in which I happily connect my interior and exterior world through shapes that hint at the origins of clay and invite other hands to follow them.

CURRÍCULUM

STUDIES

1988-1993 Universidad de los Andes, Bogota: Bachelor of Arts in Plastic Arts.

2013 Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogota: Diploma in "The Body in the History of Art"

WORK TRAJECTORY

1994-1999 Espiral Cerámica: Founding Partner – Designer – Creative Director

1999-2001 Colegio Tilatá, la Calera: Extracurricular Ceramics Teacher

2003-Present Universidad de los Andes, Bogota: Adjoined Ceramics Professor for the courses Ceramics 1 and 2, Arts Department

2009-2015 Alharaca Vajillas: Founding Partner – Designer – Creative Director

2015-2020 Universidad Javeriana, Bogota: Design, direction, and production for closure workshops for the Cardoner Seminar.

2017-Present Experimental Ceramics Workshop "El Taller", Bogota: Founder

2016-2018-2022 Member of the Coordinating Table for the International Encounter of Artistic Ceramics (ECAC), Bogota

2020 Member of the Jury for the Culture Ministry's stimuli in the category Grant for Ceramics Artists

2021-Present Universidad del Rosario, Bogota: Director and Professor of the Ceramics Workshop for the Creation Faculty

INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1994 "El ojo de Thanatos" (Thanatos' Eye), thesis, Centro Cultural Guillermo Wiedemann, Bogota

2018 "Código de Barro"

COLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

1994 "6 jóvenes artistas colombianos" Galería "El Jinete Azul", Bogota

1994 Feria de Arte de la Loma de Suba, Colegio Santa María de la Loma, Bogota

1994 "Cerámica y Animales", Tierra de Fuego, Bogota

2013 "Arte y Barro", Club el Nogal, Bogota

2016 Exposición ECAC, Segundo Encuentro de Cerámica Artística Colombia, Universidad Javeriana, Bogota

2018 Exposición ECAC, Tercer Encuentro de Cerámica Artística Colombia, Universidad Javeriana, Bogota

2019 Objetos Cerámicos Exposición Colectiva Galería Salón Comunal

2020 Objetos Cerámicos Exposición Colectiva Galería Salón Comunal

2022 Exposición ECAC, Cuarto Encuentro de Cerámica Artística en Colombia

DISTINCTIONS

1990 First Prize Sculpture Contest CEDE, Universidad de los Andes

1996 Honorary Mention at the II Biennial of Ceramics Creation, Para la Mesa Servida-Corona

2012 Traza Prize by Artesanías de Colombia for the Kitchen and Table category (Paula Acosta-Martha Patricia Mendoza, Alharaca Vajillas)