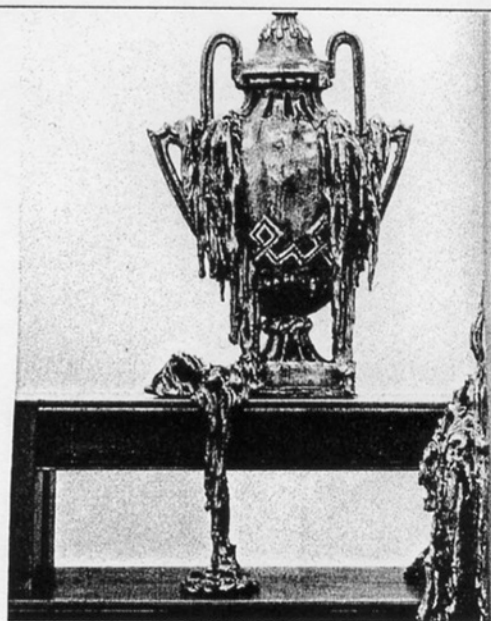


"MIT FEUER UND FLAMME"

*Ceramics in
Contemporary Art*

*Stefanie Dathe and
Barbara J. Scheuermann*

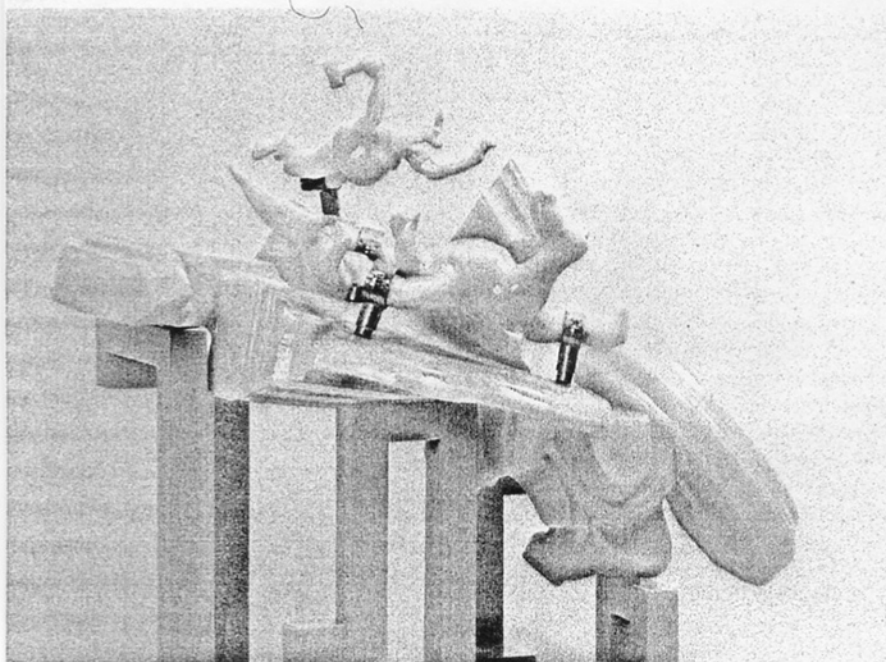


Since the beginning of the Modern Age, hierarchies and boundaries in the various artistic genres have dissolved. Today, all areas of human creativity have become playing fields for art. Since 2008, in a series of exhibitions, the Villa Rot Museum has been dedicated to an examination of the contemporary reception of historical folk art and the rejuvenation of traditional techniques at the interface between fine and applied art. In the framework of this series, the exhibition *Mit Feuer und Flamme* ("All fired up") studies the newly awakened interest in working with clay and producing

ceramics, which is among the oldest cultural achievements and craft techniques in the history of humanity. At the same time, the exhibition looks back and links up with the history of the Villa Rot Museum collection, which is largely based on the pronounced interest of museum founder Hermann Hoernes (1900-1978) in European and Asian craft. Thus French, Italian and Delft faience and majolica from the 18th and early 19th centuries can be found side by side with glazed stoneware from China, gay, fanciful porcelain figurines from Meissen and Thuringia, comparable pieces from the Chinese

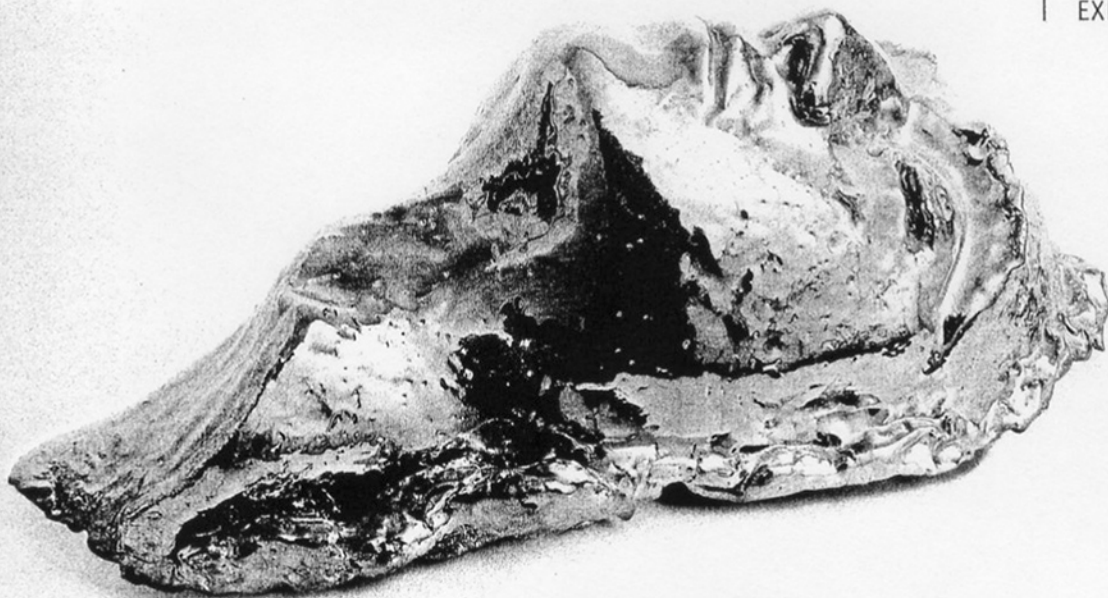
Kangxi Period (1662-1736) and a glazed terracotta relief attributed to Lucca Della Robbia (1399/1400-1482) still in the museum's holdings.

Ceramics have been an integral part of human life for thousands of years in the form of every day objects. Among the artists in this exhibition, Anke Eilergerhard, Anne Wenzel, Andrew Livingstone, Otto Piene, Norbert Prangenberg and Thomas Schütte are especially involved with forms and functions of ceramics that may be termed universal: vessels, plates and tiles are all used and interpreted like found forms in order to



The exhibition includes work by:

- Ai Weiwei (China)
- Ivan Albrecht (USA)
- Richard Deacon (UK)
- Anke Eilergerhard (Germany)
- Louise Hindsgavl (Denmark)
- Leiko Ikemura (Japan)
- Andrew Livingstone (UK)
- Uwe Karlsen (Germany)
- Markus Karstieß (Germany)
- Bodo Korsig (Germany)
- Otto Piene (USA)
- Edith Plattner (Italy)
- Norbert Prangenberg (Germany)
- Thomas Schütte (Germany)
- Anne Wenzel (Netherlands)



get to the bottom of the respective artistic questions, for example a study of light and shade, negative and positive forms or the (dys-)functionality of objects. Figurines as decorative objects like table ornaments are among the artefacts that have always stood most comfortably between the defined categories of fine and applied art. Louise Hindsgavl, Leiko Ikemura and Anne Wenzel all take up the formal vocabulary and techniques of earlier times in their delicate figurines and enrich them with images from the present such as contemporary clothing, borrowings from comics and pop culture or

with elements of horror, so that dense and at times upsetting ensembles emerge. (Cf. Anne Wenzel - Bright Solitude (Trophy) - ceramic, glaze, metal table, 2009).

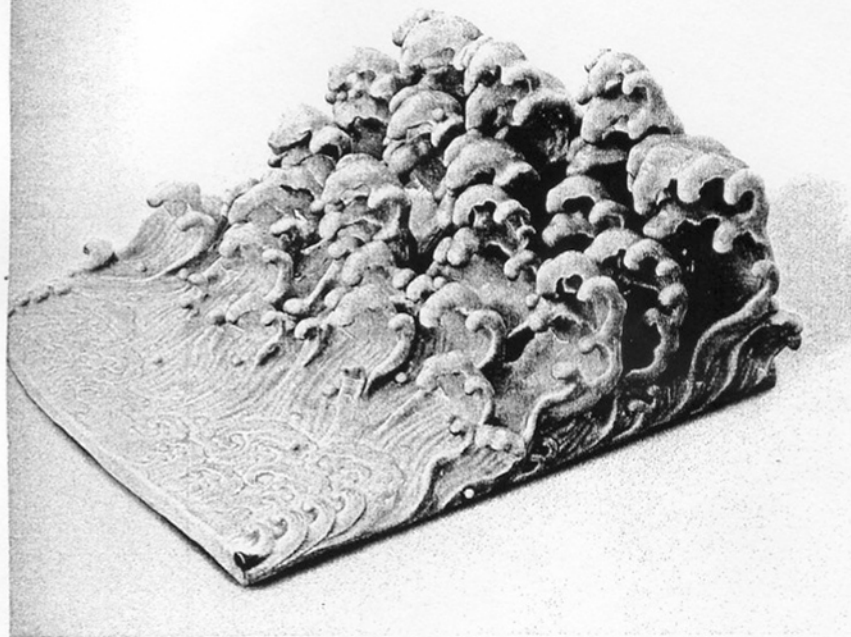
Like any other material, clay is suitable as a medium for the creation of any object or figure in the context of free sculpture, with no limitations in regard to either form or content; the clay is subjugated entirely to the artist's intentions, both its material and historic characteristics are secondary in relation to this and take on the classic supporting role of the material in a sculpture. This leads to the creation of figures

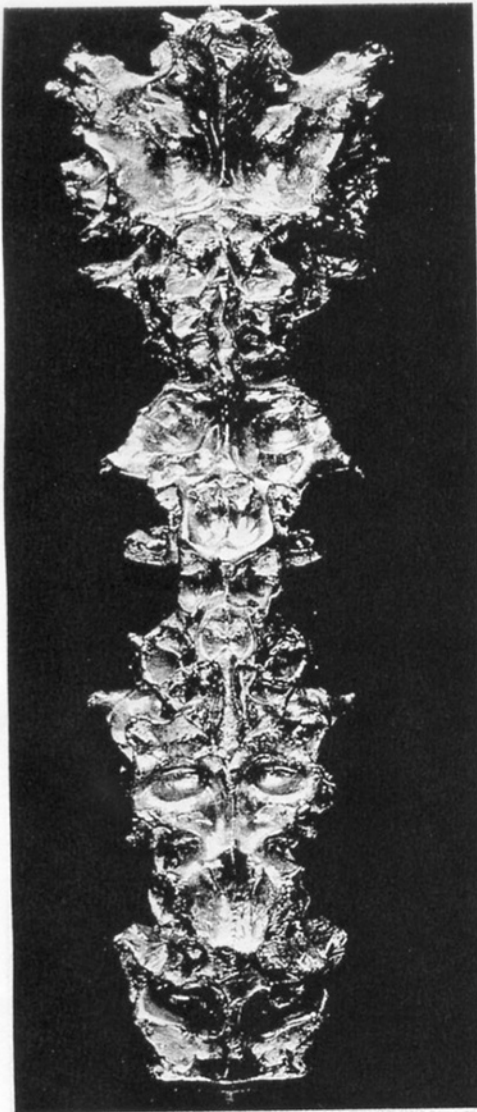
ILLUSTRATIONS - top row l. to r.

- Edith Plattner - "untitled" - ceramic - 2005
- Anke Wenzel - "Bright Solitude (Trophy #15)" - ceramic, glaze, platinum, metal table - 2009
- Thomas Schütte "Me Memorial" - ceramic, glaze 21 x 26 x 55 cm - 2007-2009 - photo - Nic Tenwiggenhorn

bottom row l. to r.

- Louise Hindsgavl - "The Favour" - porcelain, wood, metal - 65 x 50 x 37 cm - 2010
Galleri Christoffer Egelund, copenhagen
- Ai Wei Wei - "The Wave, 3" - porcelain, glaze 40 x 40 x 25 cm - 2005 Erlenmeyer Foundation Collection
- Leiko Ikemura - "Yellow Figure Holding Miko" terracotta, glazed 73 x 35 x 34 cm - 1996
photo - Jochen Littkemann





like those in the work of Anke Eilgerhard, Edith Plattner, Ai Weiwei, Ivan Albrecht, Richard Deacon, Bodo Korsig, Norbert Prangenberg or Thomas Schütte, which move at times on the border between representation and abstraction.

The ceramics that are largely concerned with the study of the particular properties of clay as a medium are mainly nonrepresentational. All of its possibilities and idiosyncrasies are made use of here: the tension between the softness of the material in its raw state and its hardness after firing, the range of colour from the natural colour of clay via the classic whiteness of porcelain to the most brilliant glazes – it is kneaded, cut, beaten, even bitten, and there are entirely uninhibited experiments with the whole breadth of the colour spectrum and the various glazing techniques. The works by Markus Karstieß, Norbert Prangenberg

and Uwe Karlsen are particularly impressive examples of this in the exhibition.

In addition and with increasing frequency, especially among the works of younger artists, clay is combined with other materials such as leather, metal, found objects or synthetics. This is a further sign of the almost completed process of ceramics being entirely swallowed up by fine art. Once again, with this appropriation of a medium, arising from the notorious insatiability of art, art faces the challenge of redefining attributions and classifications, transforming them to its own ends. And it makes no difference how old the medium is that it is making use of – it is always new.

Dr. Stefanie Dathe is an art historian and the director of Villa Rot Museum.

Dr. Barbara J. Scheuermann is art historian and a free lance curator.

ILLUSTRATIONS -

- left
Markus Karstieß - "Isenheim Moth Fetish Being"
- glazed ceramic, platinum, lustre, steel

- below
Ivan Albrecht - "Continuous Line of Racks"
porcelain, coat hooks, variable dimensions

Exhibition runs until 5 February 2012

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