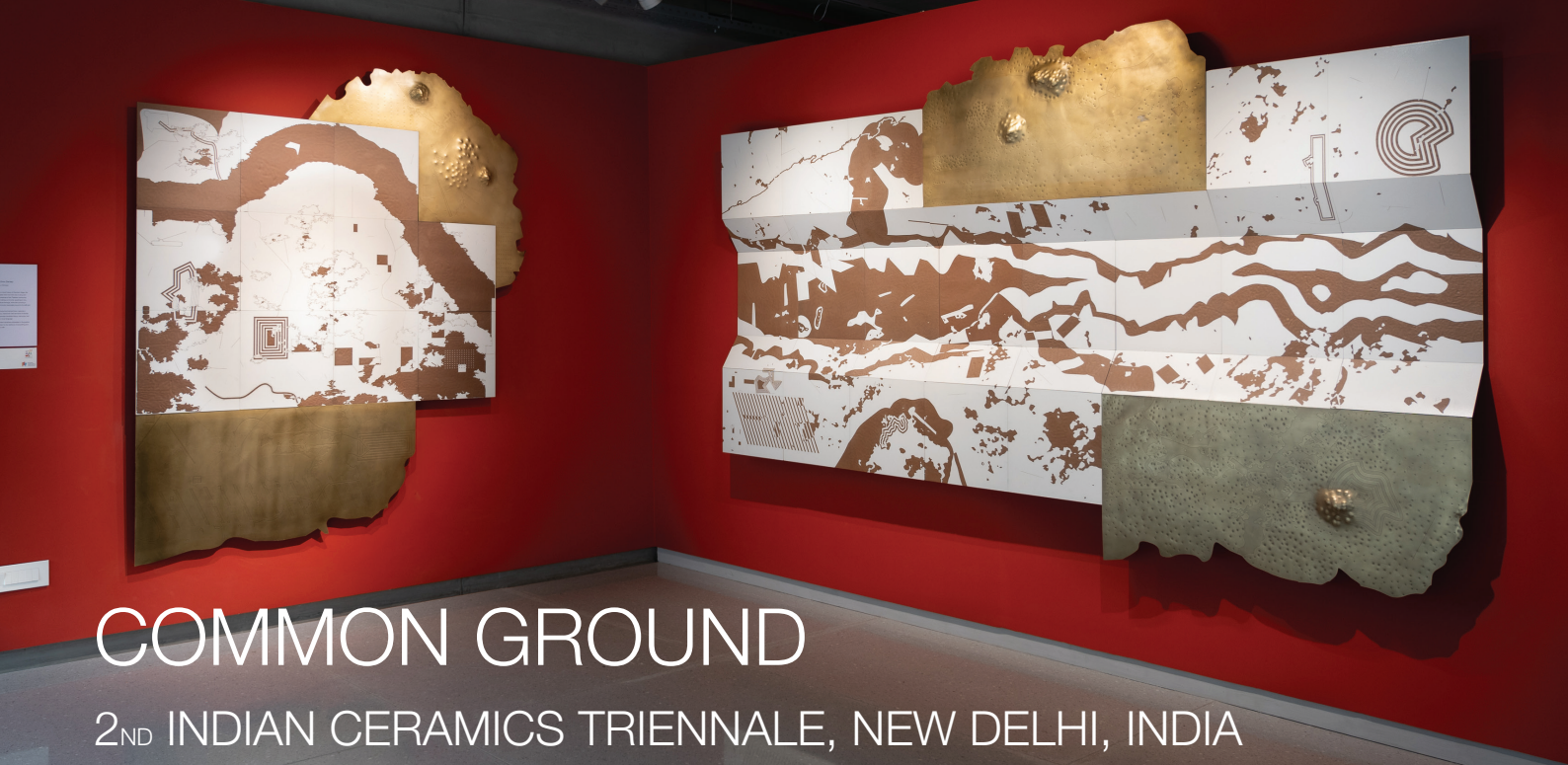




COMMON GROUND

2ND INDIAN CERAMICS TRIENNALE, NEW DELHI, INDIA

19TH JANUARY – 31ST MARCH 2024

3. *A Land of Silent Echoes*, Awdhesh Tamrakar

JANE JERMYN

When I learnt that the 2nd edition of the Indian Ceramics Triennale ICT was to take place in New Delhi in January 2024, I decided to plan a return trip to India. I had fallen in love with India back in 2014 when I had been invited to exhibit in the *International Ceramics Conclave* exhibition that year and had been back a number of times before covid hit. This would be a chance to return and meet up with many of my Indian ceramic artist friends as well as a number from the international community. The theme of the Triennale was to quote “a platform for showcasing clay-centric projects that transcend boundaries and challenge expectations”. This it certainly did – it was the most inspiring and exciting ceramics event I have ever attended. The exhibition was held at a brand-new cultural hub, Arthshila, and featured the work of over 60 artists from 12 countries resulting in 34 thought provoking projects spread over a number of floors. These projects spanned from the traditional to the ephemeral and everything in between.



1. *Shunya*, Om Prakash Galav

Indian traditional potters were represented by Om Prakash Galav and Kumbhar Ismail Hussain & members of his family. Om Prakash Galav is a potter from a family going back at least 15 generations. His installation *Shunya* consisted of a large number of exquisitely thrown and burnished lota. Lota are culturally significant vessels used in daily life in India. Om Prakash Galav has gained an international reputation for his terracotta pottery. (Image No.1)

The Kumbhar family of traditional Muslim potters come from Kachchh in the state of Gujarat. Their beautiful work is in danger of dying out as no-one wants

2. Kumbhar Ismail Hussain, Kumbhar Jamila Hazi, Kumbhar Meeriya Alarakha, Kumbhar Fatima Ismail and Khamir

to carry on the hard work of a traditional potter these days. They were to have demonstrated their skills as part of the symposium *Blurring the lines* that was held on 22nd & 23rd January, but tragically, due to the political situation at that time, they were afraid to travel to New Delhi. (A new Hindu Temple was being inaugurated by PM Modi on the site of Mosque and trouble was feared, thank goodness nothing happened in the end) (Image No.2)

A number of artists used other media alongside clay – two of the most interesting, for me, were Awdhesh Tamrakar and Kavita Pandya Ganguly. Awdhesh Tamrakar's *A Land of Silent Echoes* used commercial ceramic tiles, brass and mild steel to create a visual history of his ancestral village. The tiles, gilded with hammered and etched brass capture the essence of the river and remnant of diverse structures. (Image 3)



Kavita Pandya Ganguly used textile and clay to create an evocative 'landscape' *Navadhanya*. She used Nerikomi, a Japanese method of layered clay patterns to block print onto fabric a pattern of fields as a backdrop to the nine seed forms that are a symbol of heritage and agricultural biodiversity. There were over 2000 of the seed forms – each one handmade. (Image 4)

Prithwiraj Mali's large structure *Home for the Homeless II* used terracotta and iron to construct a statement on the needs of housing. He is inspired by honeybee colonies that migrate frequently, with each new hive being a combined effort for survival and feels that humanity is a family and that everyone has a role to play if we are to survive. (Image 5)



5. *Home for the Homeless II*, Prithwiraj Mali

The most ephemeral piece was the beautiful and delicate *The Space in Between* by Kate Roberts (USA). The gate was made from raw fibre clay and nylon fishing line by Roberts who was inspired by the iron gates seen around India. For me, the gate symbolised the lack of permanence and a vulnerability in its lack of ability to "contain" (Image 8)

The Devine Plan by Shraddha Joshi & Ross Andrew was a magnificent collaborative installation in which the artists used interconnected icosahedrons (a water element denoting human emotions) to focus on co-existence and multiple realities, reflecting one of the central ideas of a common ground. It contained over 1000 slip-cast porcelain pieces in a metal frame and lit using LED lights. (Image 9).

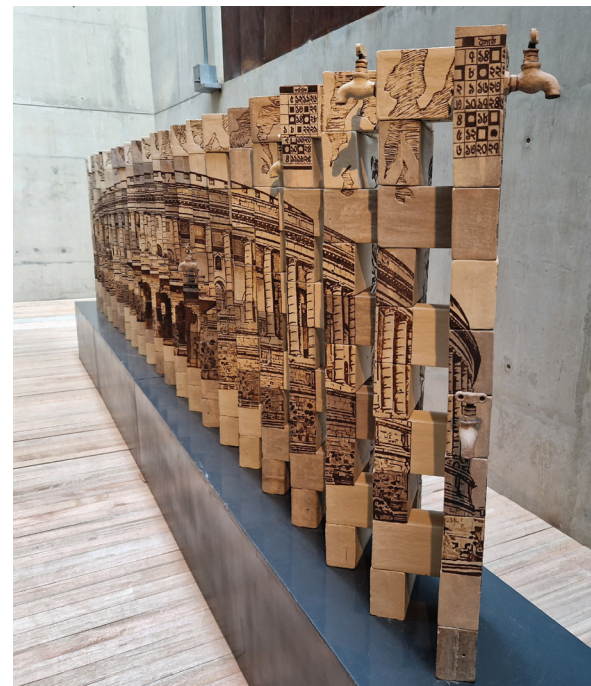
7. Chinnagama Project



4. *Navadhanya*, Kavita Pandya Ganguly

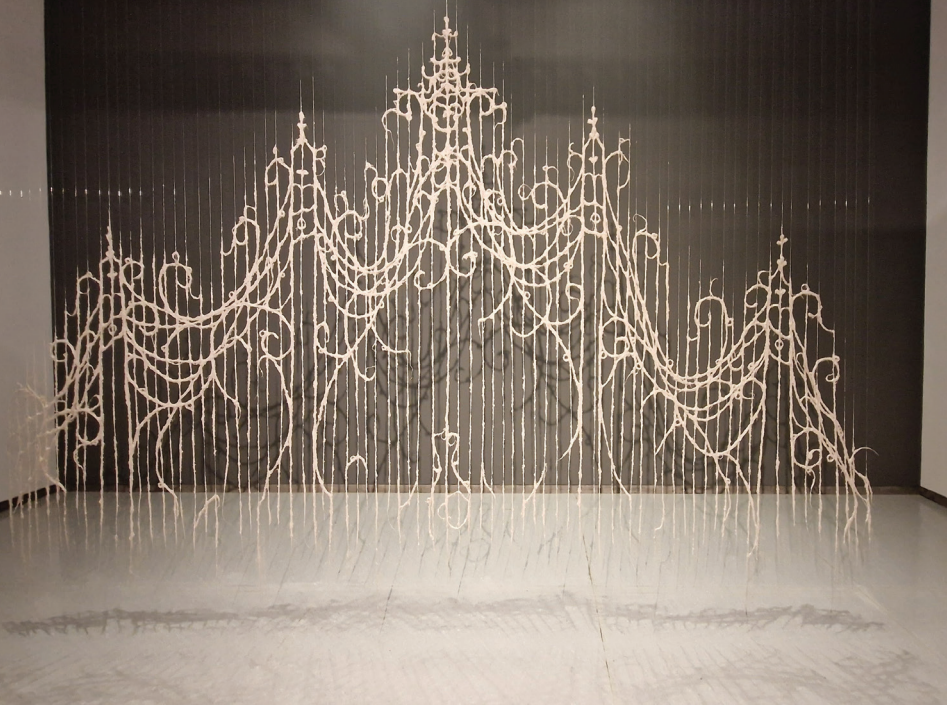
The thought-provoking installation *The Wall* by Asish Chowdhury was a stunning example of a political statement. The bricks were made from various clays brought from sites of protest. Various stories were painted on the surfaces creating a number of different stories depending on which angle the viewer is studying the piece from. (Image 6)

The Chinnagama Project is an ongoing collaboration which began in 2007 when an Australian Potter, Peter Thompson was invited by Ray Meeker to build the first anagama kiln in India at Golden Bridge Pottery. In 2012 it was re-built and renamed the Chinnagama (small in Tamil). Different approaches by people such as Jack Troy, Tim Rowan, Jeff Shapiro and John Dix amongst others has helped to build up a knowledge of anagama firings by the 15 or so artists involved in the project (Image 7)



6. *The Wall*, Asish Chowdhury

Australia was represented by the Hermannsburg Potters – a group of Aboriginal potters from Western Australia. Their ceramic pots express visually their cultural histories and lived experiences in a colourful and vibrant way. Haley Coulthard is the chair of the



8. *The Space in Between*, Kate Roberts

On Monday 22nd & Tuesday 23rd a two-day symposium *Blurring the Lines* took place at Sanskriti Kendra. These stimulating talks covered many ceramic related topics; Making & Collecting, Art & Community and Process & Methodology and were given by experts such as Elaine Henry; Dr Raj Kubba, India's foremost collector of ceramics; Haley Coulthard & Rona Rubuntja of Hermannsburg Potters in Australia and Andrew Burton & David Jones (UK) amongst others. A number of artists also demonstrated their working methods – Rona Rubuntja was extremely popular. (Image 12).

I am so glad that I was able to attend the event and am incredibly impressed with how the whole Triennale was organised. The same core team that co-founded and co-curated the 1st Indian Ceramics Triennale in 2018 put together this year's *Common Ground*. The Artist-curators Anjani Khanna, Madhvi Subrahmanian, Neha Kudchadkar, Reyaz Badaruddin, Sharbani Das Gupta, and Vineet Kacker had a shared vision back in 2016 to expand the perception of ceramics and feature the diverse range of ceramics practices in India. As they were all internationally recognised practicing ceramicists in their own right, they brought their experiences to the curatorial process and worked in a volunteer basis to create a truly exceptional Triennale.



9. *The Devine Plan*, Shraddha Joshi & Ross Andrew

10. Haley Coulthard and Rona Rubuntja of Hermannsburg Potters



11. Rona Rubuntja



Hermannsburg Potters and has been working with clay for 15 years, Rona Rubuntja is a founding member of the group and has worked with clay for over 30 years. Rona is deaf and uses clay to share stories of her life – her demonstrations during the symposium were a delight – her sense of humour was infectious. (Image 11)

These are just a small example of the fascinating and creative uses of clay on display during the Triennale. Besides the exhibition there were a number of talks, films and performances over the first couple of days of the Triennale as well as an exhibition *In Transit* organised by International Academy of Ceramics member Adil Writter of pieces by over 60 IAC members in the Shridharani Gallery and a number of parallel exhibitions in other galleries around New Delhi. At the closing of "In Transit" the attending artists gave Pecha Kucha presentations on their work – a fascinating, if very brief, glimpse of work from around the world.