

NEW CERAMICS

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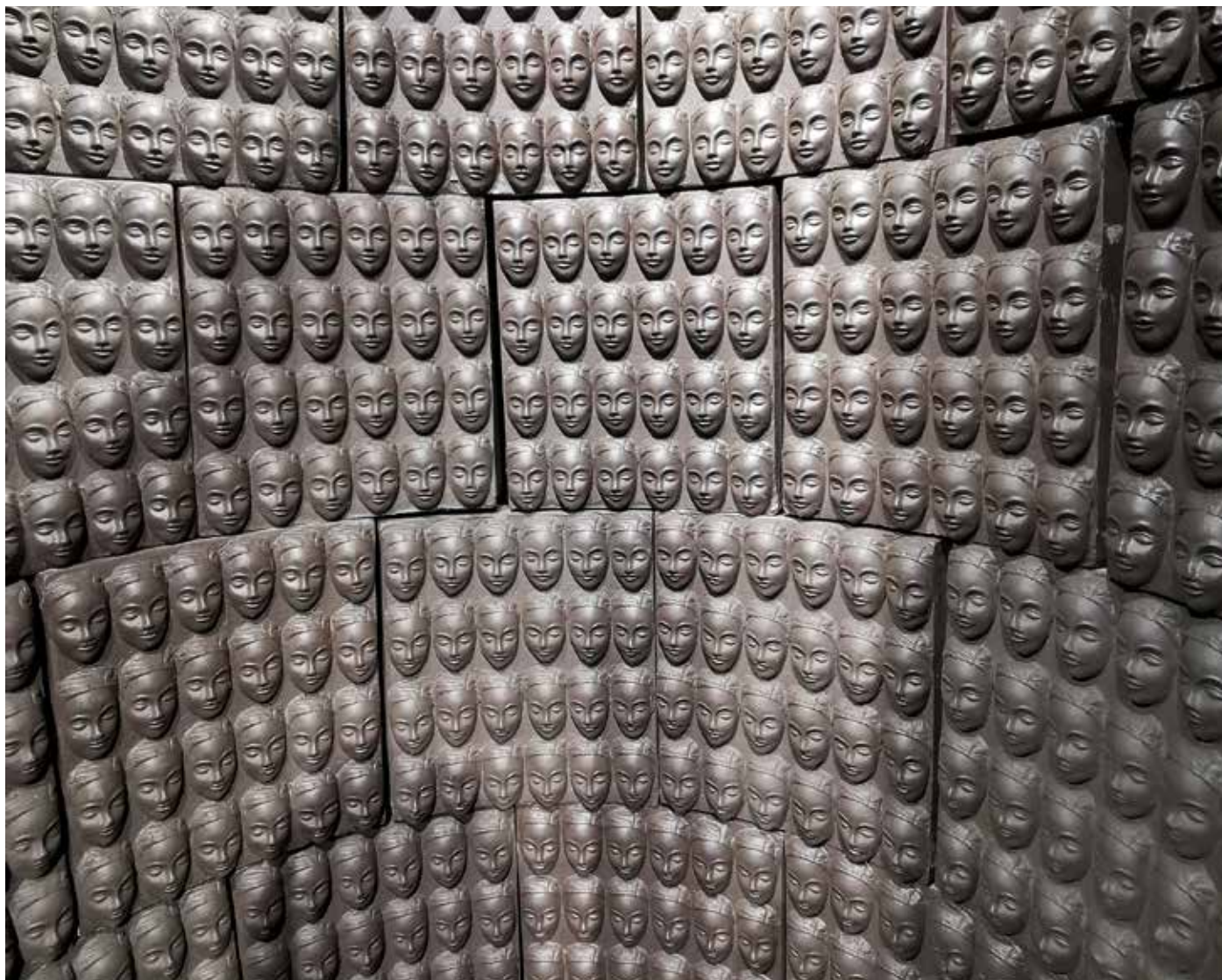


Photo - Monika Gass

CLAUDIA VON BOCH

Material and Form: People and Stories

MONIKA GASS

I saw your huge, beautiful work 2 years ago at Nyon. How did you start with ceramics?

Born in Canada in 1957, I discovered ceramics in Argentina at the age of 10 and where I lived for 23 years. When I was 10 years old my parents visited a friend, an Argentine ceramist. Visiting her studio was a real eye opener and I felt an immediate connection to clay. Ever since, I have been delving into ceramics. It is something that comes naturally to me.

First it was a hobby, but I then became autodidact - taking ceramic courses, learning technology and wheel throwing with Argentine ceramicists (Jorge Basile, Guillermo Mané). In 1990 I moved to Switzerland with my family. It was only after arriving in Switzerland in 1990 that I aimed to become a professional ceramist.

After a year at Céruleum Visual Arts School of Lausanne (1994-95) I obtained a bachelor's degree in ceramics from the Applied Arts School of Vevey (1995-99). For 25 years I taught ceramics to adults and children all the while developing my own creations in my studio that have been exhibited in Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, Croatia, US and Canada.

GENESIS 11.1-5,
2022, h 220 x d 140 cm
Black and reclaimed and layered
clays, stoneware, porcelains
coloured engobes and glazes -
unglazed slab-built blocks and
mould pressed faces
1200°C / oxidation
exhibited at the Musée d'Art du
Château de Nyon (CH) for the
National Exhibition
Swiss Ceramics 2022 -
theme: MELTING POT

Over the years I have continued with postgraduate courses in paperclay (Barbara Wagner), mould-making (Sasha Wardel, Séverine Emery-Jacquier, Francois Lemaire), calligraphy (Claire Mosnier, Denise Lach), and porcelain in Jingdezhen.

As of 2019 I stopped teaching although I continue to do occasional workshops in raku, mould-making, kintsugi. Currently I share my time between a studio in Switzerland and a second studio in the Piemont, Italy.

Do you come from a creative background, artists in your family?

Although my own parents were not artistic, our family counts many artists: Anna and Eugène Boch (impressionist painters), Monika & Michel von Boch (photographers), Helen von Boch (designer). This combined with the fact that my family has been involved in industrial ceramics (Villeroy&Boch) for nine generations has most probably had an influence on the choice of ceramic media. My father used to say that I had clay running in my veins instead of blood!

During the years that I taught ceramics, scraps and remains of various clay wastes raised the problem of disposal. That's how I came up with the idea of recuperating clay residues (stonewares, porcelains, earthenwares), coloured engobes, enamels and even cleaning water. Compared to industrial scale, my work generates very modest quantities of wastes, but for me, it represented a problem.

Thus, I incorporated it into my work, becoming the basis of all my research and creative approach. The remains of clay materials in liquid, soft or dry form are sedimented and layered into blocks. Once the clay is partially dry and malleable, slices are cut from it.

Can you explain to our readers your way of "making" - What materials you use - your firings - the "best" result for you?

I use those stratified clays which are worked into slabs, then modelled, and/or pressed into moulds. The result is a partially controlled randomness, because at the time of shaping, the colours or textures of the different layers are not visible. It is during firing that they reveal themselves: the different materials react according to their own behaviours.

These reactions cause deformations, fissures, textures, colours and drips that are not entirely predictable during shaping, but which highlight the precarious balance between clays and object, between matter and earth. Most work is single-fired at 1200° in oxidation and unglazed.

The Tower of Babel was intended to link the divine world with the earthly world. Mesopotamia is regarded today as the cradle of civilization. But to punish man, God made men speak different languages. As a result, they no longer understood each other and were scattered across the Earth.

Animumundus is a human-sized space with an inside and an outside composed of 68 blocks stacked like bricks. The exterior reproduces the geological strata that tell the story of our world through their transformations due to the action of time, erosion, sedimentation, pressure, and heat. In a shortened time-lapse, the sculpture itself becomes a geological fresco that highlights the evolution and connection between the mineral and living worlds.

It evokes an animated Earth, capable of acting between



Photo - Monika Gass



EXODUS 2017, black stoneware & recycled & layered clays engobes & glazes, modelled & slab-built, Ø 30 x 45cm 1200°C oxidation firing

the outside and the inside, constructed by superimposing materials. As an example look at this huge piece of work:

Genesis 11.1-5, 2022 - 220 cm (height) x 140 cm (diameter) was made of black and reclaimed and layered clays, stoneware, porcelains, coloured engobes and glazes plus unglazed slab-built blocks and mould pressed faces. Fired at 1200°C+ in oxidation.

This work was pre-selected and exhibited at the Musée d'Art du Château de Nyon (CH) for the NATIONAL EXHIBITION SWISSCERAMICS 2022 - theme: MELTING POT.

There is the evolution of humans, which will influence the material world giving rise to an intimately interwoven

symbiosis. In both "geohistory" and human history, the strata preserve within the stages of life and time. This is also how humans are made... each layer is added to an old one... each layer has an impact on our being and is part of a whole that is delicately and intimately linked to the terrestrial world.

The interior of the sculpture is covered with 1,536 faces, all alike, in a melting pot of humanity, but always in relation to the Earth, which acts as a container. This highlights the fact that our humanity is not above nature, but is intimately linked to it: *Anima*, the feminine in man, *Animus*, the masculine in woman, and *Mundus* the world.

The migrant is not the other...
The migrant is me yesterday or me tomorrow.
Through our ancestors or our descendants,
each one of us carries within a thousand migrants.
(Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt)

Everything is connected between individuals and the world around them. We are the faces of Gaia, Mother Earth, who at the same time pushes us towards a common destiny, a common society, where, even if the languages are different, the words are similar. This indissoluble existence between life and matter is essential, even if it is not always recognized. It remains a fragile link in an uncertain balance called life.

WAVES

Nomadic Man is a paradox, because in seeking the stability of a "promised land", he will be confronted with a world that is perpetually changing. This world on the move has always existed! From the very beginning, waves of migrations, whether voluntary or forced, have explained the history of human evolution and progress. From land to land, the nomad ventures into the unknown while maintaining a fragile link with the world left behind. Either his journey will end somewhere... or he will return to his place of origin. But in the meantime, both he and the world will have changed.

What is your intention - your inspiration?

I am fascinated by geology and its formation and how it can

Waves 2019, 120 x 120 x 35 cm, mould pressed & modelled, black stoneware, reclaimed/layered clays, engobes, 1200°C, glazed + unglazed



explain the evolution of our mineral world. But this is not enough... in my creative process, I also want to encompass the relationship and connection between humans and Earth.

We belong to each other because without the Earth we would not exist...and yet again, what would be of the Earth if the human being was not there to imagine it, understand it and model it? My characters and my objects are witnesses of this association.

You are member of IAC/AIC - what are you expecting for yourself or the future of this organization?

Last year I was able to participate for the first time at the IAC/AIC Congress. This experience convinced me to apply as a member. Like my clays, I enjoy meeting people for different horizons. It is a wonderful opportunity to share and contact other ceramicists that can only result in an enriching experience.

Where this will lead me... I'll let it surprise me!

MONIKA GASS - graduate ceramist, artist, writer juror, curator,
Director of the Keramikmuseum Westerwald (retd.) Vice President
AIC IAC, Geneva monika.gass@googlemail.com

CURRICULUM VITAE

1957 born in Quebec, Kanada, in 1965 family moved to Buenos Aires Argentina, 1990 moved to Lausanne - trained in Swiss language, French, English, Spanish, Italian

Studies: 1994 - 1995 Visual arts degree, Céruleum-Ecole d'Arts Visuels, Lausanne (CH), 1986 - 1990 Wheel throwing training, Jorge Basile, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1987 Ceramic technology training, Guillermo Mañé, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1978 - 1980 Kindergarten teaching degree, Buenos Aires, Argentina

2022 member of Homo Faber, member of Michelangelo Foundation, 2006 - 2010 managed a gallery: L'Atelier-Galerie Gaïa, Pully (CH), 2005, taught wheel throwing at the Ecole d'Arts Appliqués, Vevey (CH), 2003 taught ceramic workshops for International Baccalaureat students, International School of Lausanne (CH), 2000 member of the Swiss Ceramics Association 1998 - 2018 Worked and taught at studio L'Atelier Gaïa, Pully (CH)

Elected as new member of IAC/AIC, Geneva 2023

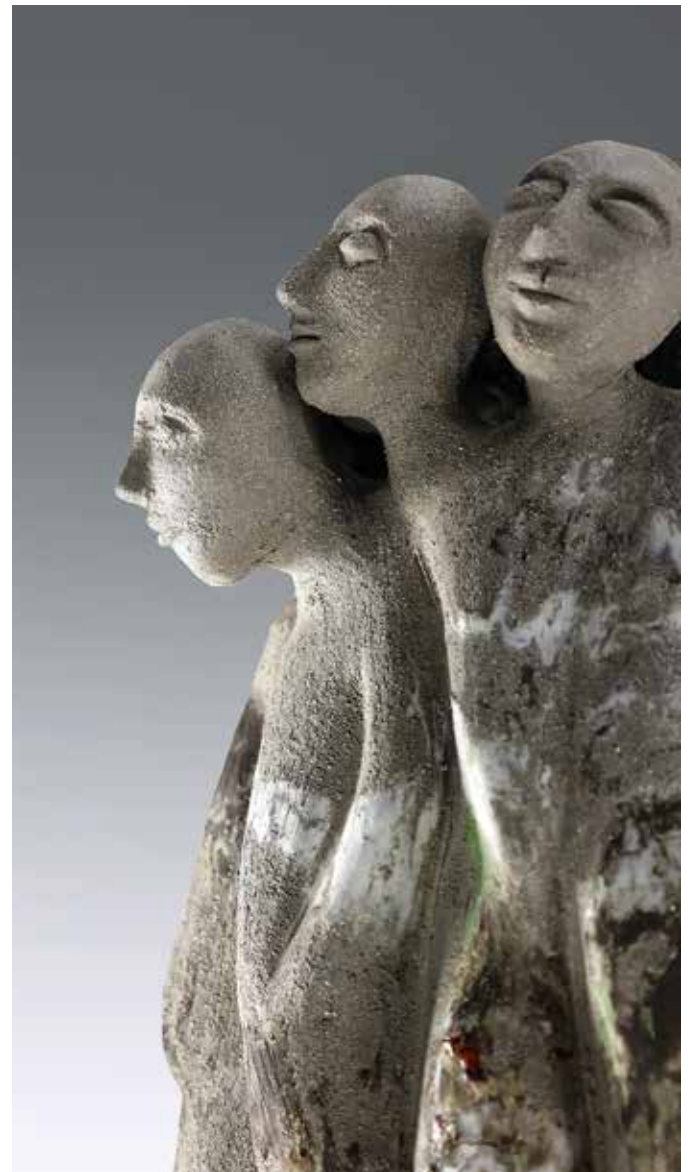
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ALL TOGETHER, 2023, Ø 20 X 46, grey stoneware - recycled & layered clays, engobes & glazes, modelled & slab-built 1200°C/oxidation

