



Galerie
Marianne Heller
Heidelberg

Friedrich-Ebert-Anlage 2
Im Stadtgarten
D-69117 Heidelberg
Tel: +49 (0) 62 21 / 61 90 90
www.galerie-heller.de
info@galerie-heller.de

**Opening "Timeless Land - Infinite Land", Pascale Lehmann, Chile, Marianne Heller Gallery,
March 24, 2019, 11.30 a.m.**

Dear Ms. Lehmann, Ms. Heller, ladies and gentlemen,

The hardest thing about a speech, at least for me, is always the start, the beginning. In the case of today's exhibition, I have decided to start with Adam and Eve - but don't worry, this will not be unduly long.

As is well known, in the Hebrew Bible there are two different accounts of creation. The second, which is older than the first, describes how God shaped man out of clay, sometimes translated as "out of arable soil", and then blew life into his nose.

This, I think, very beautiful story shows not only that God was the first ceramist - ceramics thus being a divine art - but also, if one interprets this description meaningfully, that man emerged from the earth, from nature, with the origin of life again making a quantum leap, which in the Bible is associated with the breathing in of the divine breath - or odem - in a causal connection.

But the story also shows what the findings of paleontologists and archaeologists confirm every day- that the early expressions of human creativity include the shaping use of soil, clay. How little would we know about our past if these testimonials did not exist, some of which go far beyond the beginnings of written tradition, quite apart from the fact that we have preserved early written testimonials on clay tablets. And since shaping was not enough, rather the moist, moldable material had to be hardened and preserved in fire, such findings also give us knowledge about the technical skills of earlier cultures, which have to do with the control and use of natural forces - with the classic four elements earth, air, water and fire.

All of them, in a highly complex interplay, are until today significantly involved in the creation of ceramic commodities and ceramic art, with the boundaries flowing between the two: Vascular ceramics can also be great art, as we know especially from the East Asian region, where the appreciation of precious ceramics is much more present in the general consciousness than in our culture. And with all of this, one might think of a creation myth other than the biblical one already mentioned: the story of Prometheus, who brought fire to people, something which the gods did not like at all, because by doing so, man acquired lasting abilities which until then were reserved for the gods, especially lightning-hurling Zeus. So here too, we are facing a kind of fall, which opened up unimagined possibilities to man, to the point of being able to destroy his kind and oneself. Prometheus was punished for this, but the development of human culture, for better and for worse, was now unstoppable: without fire no culture, and of course no ceramics.

The works shown in this exhibition, as can be seen at first glance, are not applied arts – artwork created for

daily use - but rather autonomous art, sculptural works of imposing dynamism, and at the same time of sovereign clarity and calm. In any case works of outstanding quality, beauty and independence. When I say "sculptural", I have to correct myself because in general usage we usually do not differentiate between "plastic arts" and "sculpture". But here, as far as the technique of manufacture is concerned, it is not about sculptures, but about plastic arts.

The two terms denote opposing methods of production: the word "sculpture" is derived from the Latin verb "sculptare", which means to cut, carve, cut, scrape, meaning that it consistently refers to processes in which something new is created out of an existing solid mass, such as a tree trunk or a boulder, by taking away something to obtain a figure that, as the great sculptor - note the term "sculptor" - Michelangelo once put it, has always been there in the block, that only has to be revealed, set free.

In contrast to this subtractive process stands the additive, named after the Greek word "platein" for "to form": matter - wax, plasticine or clay - is brought together and changed in shape. Flexibility and consistency of the material, moisture, temperature, pressure and back pressure also play a role here, whereby both methods, plastic arts and sculpture with all their contrasts, have in common that they do not refer to neutral materials, but that they themselves bring with them specific properties with which the artist has to deal intensively - in a kind of dialogical process that requires knowledge and technical skills, familiarity with the material and its peculiarities, but also awe and sensitivity - an aspect that Pascale Lehmann repeatedly emphasizes. Her respect for the material, **with** which she works, in no way **against** the same.

Inspirations often come from the material, and this applies to the works shown here, which are in no way realized by shaping as such, but in which other elementary processes play an important role, such as drying, but above all firing, which not only gives strength, but also influences the surface, color and structure in a special way

All of the works that you see here have been fired, mostly even several times, at high temperatures in a special, gas-fired ceramic kiln, resulting in melting and chemical changes in the minerals used and specifically applied, which are calculated and are components of a precise artistic concept, but also always cause surprises. Pascale Lehmann describes her work as a complex process in which the material reacts to her actions, but so does she when exposed to the acting and reacting of the material. Experimentation is a must, and joy in discovery a very important motivation for her work. Something new is supposed to be created, and it is indeed being created, but *sometimes quite differently than originally planned*.

As is well known, the inclusion of chance is particularly important in modern art, not only in ceramics. But here "playing with fire" has something that is reminiscent of the witch kitchens of medieval alchemists. Pascale Lehmann reveals that she loves alchemy.

From what has been said so far, it may have become clear what you, dear visitors, have certainly noticed long ago when looking at the works exhibited here: these pieces have a lot to do with nature, surely not as a replica, but as a personal, subjective and expressive reflection of natural experiences by the artist and, as it were, nature-analogous design with genuine possibilities of ceramic techniques, which definitely and specifically have something to do with elementary natural forces such as fire and water, sedimentation and erosion, metamorphosis and volcanism. I can think of a fitting word from Paul Klee, who once referred to art in general as the "parable of creation", in the spirit of the very well-known and perhaps too frequently quoted sentence that also came from Klee - I still quote him: "Art does not reproduce the visible, but makes visible".

The artist, who was born in Santiago de Chile in 1963 and whose German-sounding name goes back to Alsatian roots, draws inspiration for the creation of such art from the extremely diverse and contrasting

landscapes of her country. With its narrow shape it extends itself over 4200 km north-south between the Andes and the Pacific, in its width hardly reaching over 200 km. Of the most diverse geological and landscape area, it comprises the salt and copper rich Atacama in the north, one of the driest areas on earth, the rainy areas in the south, close to the Antarctic, the northern volcanoes with their six thousand meter peaks, as well as the southern glaciers and lakes. Surf and volcanism have shaped and continue to shape the morphology of the landscape, and all of this is reflected in the groups of works shown here, the Territorios, the works labeled Contrapunto or Instantes, moments, or with terms such as Impermanencia, inconsistency, Forma y Tiempo, form and time or, soberly describing, obra de pared, wall work. The title of the exhibition “Timeless Land - Infinite Land” sums it all up very nicely.

It evokes landscape, geography and geology; experiences from the macro and micro areas of nature are processed. We see layers, extremely dynamic works that have an inside and an outside, allow for a glimpse of what is behind, but also compact objects that are reminiscent of pebbles smoothed by glaciers, surf and rivers, the inclusions of which are due to millions of years of sedimentation. One will think of organics, of plants, cacti, tree bark and mushrooms, and fruits. There are also cubic blocks, the basic stereometric form of which has been broken up and modified in many ways as if by chthonic forces, works by which the artist reveals that they are hollow on the inside and that otherwise they would not be technically feasible.

At the same time, this technically-related necessity also refers to the original forms of any ceramic form, the archetype of the vessel, which is ultimately also derived from nature, with its characteristic polarity of inside and outside, a functionality that is indispensable for the applied arts, but which itself also represents an elementary natural phenomenon:

Inside and outside, mass and extremely finely differentiated surface - all of this act in her work both as tension as well as inseparable unity. A beautifully glazed surface is not somehow subsequently applied to the plastic structure, rather the one is the condition for the other as a whole, which is made from differentiated mixtures of materials, stoneware, porcelain and minerals in a complicated process of molding, melting, drying and multiple high-temperature firing, which occurs under the influence of oxidation and reduction, supply and removal of oxygen, in a process that can take several months from start to completion.

The necessary know-how was conveyed to Pascale Lehmann through a solid education at the Catholic University in Santiago, where she first studied design. Later, she worked in various ceramic studios before opening her own and experimenting with various traditional and new techniques. In Chile she has been and is present in numerous exhibitions, receiving significant prizes and awards, and her works can be found in important museums and public and private collections, among others in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Santiago de Chile.

In 2017, she represented her country at the Biennale at the Grand Palais in Paris and was elected to become a member of the International Academy of Ceramics IAC, which is based in Switzerland. But her exhibition, which opened today, is a first: her work is presented in Germany for the first time, and I think we can be grateful for it – to the artist for showing us her work and of course giving us the opportunity to acquire it, and to the Gallery owner, Marianne Heller, who once again managed to create a very special highlight with this exhibition.

Heidelberg, March 2019
Hans Gercke