

The hottest ceramics artists for 2025

We meet the cutting-edge studio ceramicists who are revitalising one of the oldest crafts

Studio ceramics — defined as pottery created by artists working alone or in small groups to create one of a kind piece in limited quantities — is having a moment.

“There is something really quite raw, quite human, about ceramics. It’s an art form that goes back to prehistoric times, while also being such a contemporary medium,” says Marijke Varrall-Jones, who worked at Bonhams before she founded Maak, a London-based ceramics auction house.

Ceramics are a tactile antidote to our exhaustingly digital lives — hence the explosion of interest in them during the pandemic. “At a time when people couldn’t see or touch each other, there was something comforting about an object made from the earth, of which you can almost feel the impression and warmth of the human hand,” Varrall-Jones says. “Ceramics resonate with our perennial need for connection.”

Here we take a look at some of the most exciting studio ceramicists from around the world.

Magdalene AN Odundo **UK**

“I’ve always equated clay with the humanity that’s within us, fragile like our bodies. It can tip over. You have it on its toes, but if you push just slightly on the wrong pivot, it will break your heart,” says the Kenyan-born Magdalene AN Odundo. At the age of 74, she is one of the world’s most highly regarded ceramic artists.

Odundo works in a Surrey studio, building her pots from coils of clay and burnishing their surfaces to a sheen. The pots are fired in an oxidising atmosphere so they turn red-orange, then a second firing in a low oxygen kiln turns the clay black. Odundo’s work draws from techniques used from Africa to the American southwest, and even in classical Greece and Rome. Odundo’s pots are instantly recognisable in the way they evoke the female form, whether a swollen womb, curve of a spine, or an elegant head with a piled-up hairstyle.

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This vibrant work by King Houndekpinkou blends Japanese and African influences

KING HOUNDEKPIKOU

King Houndekpinkou, France

It's nigh-on impossible to look at one of King Houndekpinkou's almost-edible creations and not feel a sense of joy. Houndekpinkou grew up in the Parisian suburbs where he was influenced by Japanese pop culture: video games, anime and manga. On a trip to Japan he discovered the historical city of ancestral Japanese pottery, Bizen, and ended up training with the ceramicist Toshiaki Shibuta. Houndekpinkou was struck by the ceremonial approach of Shibuta's work, infused with the spirituality of Shinto, which echoed with the animist traditions of his Beninese heritage.

Most of his work is executed on the potter's wheel. "I throw a tall vessel, then add the textured spikes one by one, which can take up to eight hours. Then the whole piece is fired three times and I add real gold. The piece is meditative to make and its spike ornaments refer to west African ritual pottery."

kinghoundekpinkou.com

MICHAEL HARVEY

Bodil Manz, Denmark

Bodil Manz's signature form — a wafer-thin, almost transparent cylinder — is pure elemental Danish simplicity. But to this she adds her own interpretation of cubism, with blocks of colour and grids of lines, meditations on Mondrian or the Danish cubist Vilhelm Lundstrom.

Manz's process is to pour a liquid porcelain clay known as slip into build plaster casts to form complex shapes and cylinders. She and her husband, Richard, refined this technique and worked together to set up their workshop in 1967. The writer and curator David Whiting says of her work: "Objects of this beauty simply change a room, and add something luminous, metaphorically and literally, to our sensory perception."

oxfordceramics.com

Aneta Regel

UK

Aneta Regel considers herself as an alchemist as much as an artist. In addition to clay and layers of glaze, Regel uses volcanic rocks, basalt, granite and minerals called feldspars, resulting in visually complex surfaces and textures.

Her art reflects nature; her show *Volcanic Totems* — featuring pieces that resemble silver birches — was recently shown at Tefaf Maastricht, with the Sarah Myerscough Gallery. The inspiration came from the memories of childhood games growing up in northern Poland. "The forest was a massive playground to me as a child. Trees were climbed to the point of naming certain branches and calling them home. I look to reflect that familiarity and intimacy in the pieces I make."

anetaregal.com



Andile Dyalvane
South Africa

Born in 1978 in the small village of Ngobozana in a Xhosa area of rural South Africa, Andile Dyalvane grew up on a farm, looking after his father's cattle. The experience formed a powerful connection to the land that resonates through his work today. Since 2016, he has been developing his own system of pictograms which he weaves into his ceramics to denote important concepts in Xhosa culture. These include *entshonalanga* (sunset), *igubu* (drum), *umalusi* (herdsman) and *izilo* (totem animals).

He says: "Symbols are visual tools harnessed to more effectively impart meanings within messages — codes, if you will — that aid stories." These symbols animate his work, whether embodied in their sculpted forms or stamped and painted into their surface.

southernguild.com

Lana Trzebinski
Kenya

Born in Nairobi in 1993, Lana Trzebinski spent many happy hours as a child in her artist father Tonio's studio, playing with plaster of Paris, messing around with paints. In his spare time, Tonio was also an avid surfer. "If he wasn't painting we were at the beach," Lana recalls. No surprise that her ceramics recall the undulating waves of the sea and the ethereal colours and textures of coral, urchins and anemones.

Trzebinski sources her clay from Nyeri in the central Highlands, sculpts her design at her Nairobi studio, then leaves it to dry for up to four months. The first firing is at up to 1,000C, then comes a glaze, and she follows up with an even hotter second firing. The unique glaze she uses means the resulting colours will always be something of a surprise. "They seem to have a life of their own," she says.

lanatrzebinskiceramics.com

Takuro Kuwata,
Japan

Born in Hiroshima in 1981, Takuro Kuwata now works in Gifu, Japan, known for its traditional ceramics. But there is nothing traditional about Kuwata's interpretation of Japanese *wabi-sabi*. Bold blues, bright pinks and vivid yellows are his palette, fractured with glistening gold and silver embellishments and droplets and a high shine glaze. Some look positively extraterrestrial, others resemble vivid, poisonous fruits.

His work can be seen in private and public collections across Japan, Europe and the United States. "I'm not trying to break the rules, I just want to apply a contemporary sensibility to pottery," he says.

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