

FORM & CONCEPT

CRITICAL READINGS IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB CERAMICS

BY YACOUB AL-ATOOM
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FORM & CONCEPT

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CONTEMPLATION

FORMATION

MOMENT

Authors Introduction



This book aims to highlight on some Arab ceramists in the Arab world and to present their most important artistic works, which are characterized by the beauty of the contemporary ceramic form, the structural design structure, and the philosophical diversity of the content, in addition to presenting their technical treatments, methods and orientations in the formal text, because there is a scarcity of books on Arab ceramists and their artistic biographies, and presenting their experiences. This book will also present a new method of presentation by adding fertile critical and analytical articles on ceramists and ceramics. These critical opinions benefit researchers and academics for masters and doctoral students, and raise the cultural value of ceramics more in our Arab societies, and contribute to the international community's knowledge of the importance of Arab ceramics.

I also made great efforts to search for new information (historical, artistic or technical), by interviewing these potters, and searching and investigating new sources for the first time presented in the content of the book, as well as choosing two titles and various concepts, and introductory axes, as a gateway for the reader, in which I focused on several axes: form, concept and technique; cultural heritage, and the overlap of genres in the visual arts, and the problematic nature of drawing and painting through ceramic art techniques. These axes are important for the reader and give him an idea before entering into knowledge and reading the artist's experiences and ideas, so that we crystallize the complete vision of the artist's achievement, in addition to the importance of what was written by critics and

experts in aesthetics and philosophy, whom I used to enrich the book with their opinions, analyses and interpretations of the artwork with its trends and methods. In the second axis, which is considered the most important part and is called (Shadows of Immanence), which documents the biography of the ceramist and his concepts and analyzes some of his experiences under various philosophical and critical titles, and in the third axis, which focuses on conceptual works and the art of installation in process, through a group of ceramists who practice this experience in which the artwork meets the recipient to begin the process of interpretation, thinking, and contemplation. As for the last part, it contains a group of general terms in art and ceramics, in addition to references, emails, and the book's final word.

After the dream of gathering Arab ceramists in the Kuwait celebration, and printing the first documentary book (Contemporary Arab ceramics) in 2023, with the support of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, and after the International Gathering of Arab ceramists - new steps appeared for other forums such as Global International Ceramics Forum (Glan University) in 2024, and the cloud of Arab ceramic began to move across the Arab world, and ceramists joined the International Academy of Ceramics, Switzerland, Geneva, and ceramic became more important and clear to every lover of ceramic and pottery, with the intimacy of clay, the pleasure of construction, intellectual diversity, formal distinction, the magic of technology, and in the end the completion of the ideal artistic achievement. Therefore, I decided that there would be another book that is more in-depth from a theoretical and research perspective, and more specialized to show Arab ceramic in the correct image and publish it in the Arab and international world.

"A Glimpse into Arabic Culture and Ceramics"



1,300 years before the rich Islamic history, art was flourishing in the Arabian Peninsula. According to archaeological evidence, prehistoric Ubaid pottery appeared in southern Mesopotamia around 3700-5500 BC. The world's oldest pottery wheel was also discovered in Mesopotamia, believed to date back to 3400 BC. A 14 cm long model of a red clay boat was excavated from Failaka Island in Kuwait. Such examples show how far back the traditions of pottery and seafaring go in the history of this colorful region. Decorative carved pottery fragments have been discovered in the historic city of Najran in southwestern Saudi Arabia, helping to shed further light on the migration, settlement and history of the Arabs.

After the rise of the Caliphate in the 7th century CE, Islam, along with the Arabic language and writing, spread throughout Mesopotamia and North Africa. Whether they were leading camels on long journeys through the barren deserts or sailing boats across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Arab travelers could rely on their knowledge of astrology to navigate. Crossing back and forth between three continents, connecting regions as diverse as Persia, India, China, Egypt, Greece, and East Africa, it was their efforts and expertise that made Western Asia and North Africa one of the most important historical crossroads of trade and culture in the world.

Benefiting from cultural exchanges with other Islamic regions such as Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, potters in Baghdad and Samarra developed tin-glazed pottery and lusteware, along with lustre-glaze techniques. These ceramic techniques spread widely throughout the Islamic regions and southern Europe, leading to the dominance of glazed ceramic decoration in Islamic architecture.

While I was in Kuwait, I received a beautiful catalogue entitled "Contemporary Arab Ceramics by the Author" ceramist Yacoub Al-Atoom", which showcases ceramic artists and their works from 18 countries, totaling 229 artists, 78 of whom are women. They come from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen in West Asia, as well as Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco in North Africa.

A quick tour inevitably misses many opportunities to observe finer details. The field of contemporary Arab ceramics is so rich and diverse that it is difficult to describe it in just a few words. Even at a quick glance, it is possible to see works with experimental, exploratory, traditional, abstract, concrete, decorative or conceptual aspects.

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Therefore, the emergence of the artwork begins with the connection of these elements to each other, and is called the (Significant Form), which is the formative relationships that arouse in the viewer a unique sensory and emotional dimension that differs from the emotions of daily life, where we only need to understand the shape and color in reception. Many critical and aesthetic theories have addressed the sensory dimension in the form, and the formal theory considered that the form and its construction are the basis for the aesthetic dimension of the artwork, led by (Clive Bell and Roger Fry), who confirmed that the form and its aesthetics are the result of visual relationships of abstract components, so the aesthetic construction is produced by those formal formulations far from the contents or topics that the work takes as its subject, and the sensory dimension is nothing but a result of those relationships. (Stollins, Jerome, 1981)



Khalid Al-Dabbas, *King, One Hour*, 2019, 2019 cm

The (Gestalt theory) also emphasized the importance of form and its sensory dimension, as form is a final structure for the properties of the whole by studying the properties of the part, just as we cannot study the properties of water by merely studying the properties of (oxygen and hydrogen) that enter into its composition." (Abdul Hamid, 1987).

After all that, we say: "The clay material has a spiritual attraction, and aesthetic color characteristics that enrich the formal elements present in the structural framework of the form, due to its flexibility, fragility, and hardness, in addition to the texture formative formulation, and treatments with different possibilities, and thus he moves towards the aesthetic goal of producing a form subject to a convincing visual vision."

The artistic and technical methods in the art of ceramics have diversified, relying on expressive and visual aesthetic performance. With the artistic development, technical treatments have been found that have exceeded the aesthetic and structural boundaries, by relying on the potter's transformation and imagination in the ceramic form, the rules of the formal structure in the subject became clear, and the focus was on the elements of the artwork.

Therefore, ceramics has been affected by technological development, means of communication and advanced techniques, even some of the old techniques have not been dispensed with by contemporary ceramists, and sometimes artists return to applying line, color and its degrees, and its chemical transformations at different temperatures, all this in order to search for techniques that change the concept of the artwork, as the artist is always searching for beauty, whether on pottery or ceramic sculptures of different dimensional figures, which he translated into his own language, to be an artistic, intellectual, aesthetic and functional expression.

Therefore, the artist's intention in using technique should arise on the basis of aesthetic experience, for without it the technical act will lead to absurd results. The discovery, acquisition and application of technique must be linked to experience and the results of the technical act, and this will only come about through practice and prior knowledge of the nature of the technique used, since "the artist's intention in using a certain technique and setting a goal for the work process does not arise except after concentrated manual experience" (Fisher, 1971).

Nabil Darwish was fascinated by the ancient Egyptian ceramic before the dynasties. The pottery puzzled him as it puzzled archaeologists and ceramic artists before him, and how the Egyptian artist in ancient times was able to invent this pot with the "black nozzle" and reddish body. Nabil used to visit the Antiquities Museum every day and sit and contemplate these ancient pottery pieces for hours. When someone asked about him, he was told, "He is next to his beloved black vase." He conducted his continuous experiments and succeeded in simulating this ancient pottery, which was the title of his doctoral thesis on the black vase and its secret in the pre-dynastic era.

Regarding Nabil Darwish's works and their aesthetic, expressive and human values, the critic and translator (Naim Attia) says: "The group of pots and drawings that we see on their ceramic surface are not superficial drawings written with a brush, but rather they are from the core of the ceramic work. If you take a section of the pot, you will find this color, and the colored line is not a drawing, but rather from the ceramic clay itself. This technique is called (inlay), and this is achieved by creating colored clay in the clay body, and after firing this linear color contrast appears.

Nabil Darwish also succeeded in producing dark blue clay, as he succeeded in producing light blue clay before him (200 years ago) at the hands of the English potter (Josiah Wood Goode), and also the traditional ceramists in China.



There are many treatments that Nabil Darwish has tried, such as painting in blue, black and dark green at high temperatures, or painting with transparent paints on black objects, painting directly on pottery objects, controlling the amount of carbon on black pottery works, painting with raised clays on white clay objects, and reduction with metallic luster.

Nabil was influenced by what the English ceramist Josiah Wedgwood (1795-1730) made, and he mentioned this in his doctoral thesis in 1980, and this influence in terms of the black and blue colors on the ceramic vessels. This artist documented the outcome of his works in a book called (Experiment Book), as he had experience in various pottery and porcelain techniques, and employed his skills and experiences in his own factory, so his products were distinguished by a type of porcelain called (Cream Colored), and at that time the queen adopted it in making her own vessels, and they were called (Queen's vessels). Wedgwood was also distinguished by another type of vessels, which is black basalt, which is a black porcelain as hard as stone, and is also known as "Egyptian ceramic", from which flowers, candlesticks, and busts of historical figures were made. In addition, he was distinguished in producing a type of porcelain called Jasperware, which is very strong porcelain. Unglazed and similar to Chinese porcelain, blue and sometimes green in color, decorated with fine white carvings in detail, and also vases in white and blue, dating back to the first century AD.



Josiah was highly influenced by neoclassicism, as shown in his neoclassical Porcelain Vase in black basalt with silver-oxide, 1793

Josiah Wedgwood, circa. ca. 40, 1800 cm.



Waseel Al-Sayigh, Ceramic mural (inspired by Sharif), 60x170. Acquired by the Department of Culture in Sharjah, 2020

This great momentum of heritage elements in all civilizations is nothing but a visual discourse that the ceramist has employed in his artistic works. Some of them have embodied and imitated the symbol in his ceramic sculpture, some have drawn it with colored oxides in the incised style, and some have used it in the printing style on ceramic tiles, and also, and more importantly, adding this heritage to the structural structure of the form, or making modifications and alterations to it, and sometimes with shiny and glossy glaze coatings, or adding contemporary touches to the details of the heritage word. All of these formal translations are the ceramists' path and his experience with which he addresses the recipient, or social or political issues.

Thus, we will not prolong the discussion of the heritage in our Arab civilizations because it is full of symbols, meanings and formal elements, and it cannot be limited to one work of art or one ceramic form, but rather it requires an extended study in its use in the formal structure, so we will suffice with presenting general examples, and leave room for researchers and authors to write a special book that includes studies of the Arab heritage in the ceramic form, and perhaps in this book there are many examples that cover a part of our knowledge of Arab culture, especially the state of Egypt and Iraq, because of their long history and different and varied historical eras.

THE THIRD AXIS

cultural heritage and ceramic form

The analysis of (shape) and the decomposition of its elements and symbols in Arab ceramic cannot be determined except by its cultural references, the environment that the artist lives around him, and the external influences, especially the technical ones, which greatly affected the fabric of the formal structure of the composition. In addition, the shape in Arab ceramic in its beginnings was characterized by its richness, the abundance of its decorative elements, its colors, the size of its mass, and its familiar traditional simplicity, until the shape developed and became stable in its formal mass, and the diversity and multiplicity of its structural texts. Also, the ceramist's knowledge of many types of fertile clays in their content helped him increase the expressive and aesthetic ability of the shape and give it more spiritual energy. We must not forget that the technical aspect was also limited in its beginnings and by the use of ordinary glazes, so the technical aspect played a role in understanding the shape more, and knowing its aesthetic reality in the visual image more, and the ceramist began to practice and experiment more, to reach a philosophically and intellectually convincing artwork, through the multiplicity of techniques and their harmony with different shapes.

Therefore, the cultural heritage is considered the cultural, political, social and religious source of all Arab civilizations. The ceramist employs it in the compositional identity, which is determined by symbols, vocabulary and decorative elements, whether ornamental or formal.

The aesthetic level also begins around the artwork by building a new perception of the components of reality and its data in the recall between the past and the present, and the mechanism of organizing it through shapes and images to achieve a new structure. The artist cannot resort to the same shapes and elements that have exhausted their value, meaning and function, and he must find new formulators for those images and shapes to create their sensory, aesthetic and artistic cultural impact on the recipient. (Marcus, 1979).

Tunisian researcher Dr. Awatif Mansour says: "Every artist wants to show his own vision with an individualistic tendency, expressing his liberation from the sultanate of the elements and components of cultural heritage, but some of them elevated the national identity towards universality, and that many are still bound to the environment and the iconic mark, and that these artists subject their own experiences and personal tendencies in material and color, to produce ceramics or fossil drawings that are contemporary, and distance themselves from clinging to heritage in diverse and different research formations and visions." (Mansour, 2022).



Amr El-Eswary, Egypt, 2018, White white clay. The vessels are inspired by African art.



Hader Akher / Iraq
Black and white
30x30
70 x 80 cm



ARTIST: DINA AL-SHISHANI, GATE OF THE EAST, JORDAN
28X21 CM - INK DRAWING ON PA PEP



ARTIST: MALAK AL-AJRABI, JORDAN, POTTERY GODS
28X21 CM - INK DRAWING ON PA PEP



PART ONE

1. **Conceptualization of ceramic form**
2. **The aesthetics of sculptural ceramic**
3. **Cultural heritage and ceramic form**
4. **Interdisciplinarity of ceramics within the visual arts**



Laith Abbas was born in Iraq - Baghdad, in 1970, residing in Sweden, graduated from the University of Baghdad, Free Art of Ceramics in 1994, and obtained a masters degree from the University of Baghdad, Free Art of Ceramics in 2002. He is a member of the International Academy of Ceramics, Switzerland, Geneva, and a member of the Swedish Artists Union. He has many participations and personal exhibitions, including: Eriksberg Museum in Tranås, Sweden 2010, another exhibition in Eksjö with the participation of other artists in 2014, 2011, and he has private exhibitions in different cities in:

- 2014 Solo exhibition, Odishaug.
- 2009 Participant in the TRANÅS technical workshop.
- 2015 Solo exhibition, Tranås.
- 2015 Solo exhibition, Österbyrno.
- 2016 Lansalungen, Jönköping
- 2017 Special exhibition in Gnesta.
- 2017 Kooji, Jönköping
- Salon Fall 2017, Edsvik Stockholm.
- 2018 Misvick Museum
- 2018 exhibit my artwork at Guildler Gallery 701 Jönköping.
- 2019 The Municipality of Tranås bought a sculpture from me.
- 2020 State House, Transas.
- 2022 Provincial Museum, Jönköping.
- 2022 Lansalungen Jönköping.

VISUAL FANTASIA OF THE IMAGINATION (SPELLBOUND CLAY)

Laith Abbas

(7)

The legendary ceramist Laith Abbas spoke about his concept and his own world, saying: "Visible reality hides from us things and incidents that have unknown worlds with dimensions that overlap with the human world, and accordingly events are formed by the infiltration of strange beings from the world of the unknown into the world of reality which are effective in creating dramatic events. This is what I call (myth) which I see as the possibilities of occurrence due to the laws that the world possesses, which make it form several possible aspects, and the form that I work on is one of these aspects, as the mythical being I have possessed qualities that make it have human characteristics, but it is still restricted by its mythical form, so it is combined with the events that humans possess, forming them and they forming it."

The artists works usually consist of ceramic sculptures and large vases, using stoneware, followed by different types of glazing techniques, such as Engobe, Majolika, and different types of glazes that he prepares himself (Underglaze and Overglaze), in addition to using real gold and the shine.



The Golden Kowloon, 40x45cm, 2022



Mona Gharib was born in Egypt in 1984. She holds a PhD in ceramic sculpture from Alexandria University in 2014. She is a member of the Syndicate of Fine Artists. She has had private exhibitions, including: an exhibition at the Palace of Taste in Sidi Gaber, Alexandria, 2003, an exhibition at the Anfoushi Cultural Palace in Alexandria, 2005, an exhibition at the Mohamed Rashid Center for Cultural and Social Development, 2009, the 'Womens Power' exhibition at Lamiasat Hall in Cairo, 2015. - 'Inspired by Siwa' exhibition at the Book Hall in Cairo, 2015, the main exhibition (Genesis) of the Faculty of Fine Arts - Alexandria, November 2018, an exhibition entitled 'Stages' at the (Noto) Gallery in Zamalet - August 2021. As for group exhibitions, they included: the exhibition (Sculpture Document) at Darb Hall (1718) in October 2016, the exhibition (Dinner) at the Dhi Art Gallery, 2018, and the international and external exhibition: the Biennale The Fifth Constitutional Exhibition of Tunis 2008, Alexandria International Atelier Book in Bekaa (1996) at Mahmoud Mokhtar Cultural Center 2010, Casbah International Artists Forum in Morocco 2014.

SCULPTURE CERAMIC (ME AND THE BODY)

Mona Gharib

(15)

MONA GHARIB



the content and form and what they impose in terms of analysis, interpretation and automatic development, as (Ross) explained: "It is like the ceramist shaping clay, like the builder building with stones and like the weaver moving her needle on the general fabric." (Ibrahim, 2000).

In general, form is closely linked to content, and there is no doubt that it is separated from it to some extent in some eras, but these are exceptional eras, and in such eras form lags behind content, or vice versa. But art cannot be outside the classes of society, as there is no art above classes, but rather the statement of the idea of artistic creation in its visible form and its manifestation in images, and the discovery of the whole and unity in its parts (Plekhanov, 1977).

This means that analysis is followed by an evaluation of the artistic and aesthetic characteristics, and the emergence of critical action is a necessary complement to it, as the style goes to contain the human being, as a transformed adaptation to the inner demands of the material with which the sculptor sculpts his statues and with which the painter composes his forms. Thus, the style applies to the style of performance or implementation, which is considered a condition of the material used and the method of its implementation, meaning that the artwork is included in the subjective interior, and it must become a visible reality after its maturity in subjectivity. Especially since the artist returns by dividing the classes towards the alphabet of the society that appreciates the artistic work in his era, "the artist himself belongs to a certain era, and he lives among its morals and customs, and shares its way of thinking and its perceptions." (Tarabishi, 1978).

The composition is nothing but the (final form) of the artwork that distinguishes it in its existence and reality, and thus the whole contains the parts, and even the multitude of elements that represent the subject and in turn represent the reality of the accomplishment - for sculptural pottery works - which constitutes the expression of the artist's ability and what enables him to release his energies in order to reach the artwork that carries a special entity in terms of form and then the judgment on it. (Barthélemy, 1970).



Mohamed Shalaby
Giraffe
2010
Kala Mahanagel
60cm

At the end of the twentieth century, after people in New York were dealing with porcelain as a commodity that they traded and acquired as decorations that added aesthetics to places in homes, then ceramic art developed and became used in sculpture, where Ernst Barlach (1938-1890) and Paul Rudolf Henning (1986-1886) came up with the idea of adding porcelain to sculpture under the name of ceramic sculpture, because clay is a material that helps better in sculpting and adapting due to its shaping properties before and after firing, but it requires precision and caution. With all this development that Western arts have reached, they stood perplexed in front of the traditional oriental works and how they produced bright colors with unique aesthetics, but after their immersion in experimentation with porcelain, they reached the point of mixing clay with mineral oxides to produce the colors used in oriental porcelain, producing works close to impressionism. (De Waal, 2003).

Ceramic sculpture is one of the most important ceramic forms that the ceramist deals with. It is extensive and extended, and contains many different formal texts, which are characterized by different styles and techniques, abstract and expressive trends, and the personification of humans, animals, and plants. There are many examples of this, and we will mention examples of them in the third part.

Therefore, the artist's imagination in constructing a pottery sculpture differs from one artist to another, according to his experiences, perceptions, and practices of formal texts, and according to the technique that suits the concept, in addition to his skill in studying reality sufficiently to qualify him to produce an authentic work of art, linked to his culture, or influenced by other cultures, or the intervention of nature with all its components and its provocation of his imagination in creating new compositions. It is a world full of details and perceptions that we do not expect or perceive in the special envelope of the artist's imagination.

Imagination is a tool of aesthetic awareness, as (Collinwood) says, imposed by pure rational reasoning, where aesthetic awareness is aided by imagination and woven by contemplation and the features of the artwork,



Ahmad Alwan, Turtle, 2022
60x21 cm

The composite image, as described by (Dr. Muhammad Al-Kanan) in its first axis, is that which is within the circle of imagination and is a composite image due to the accumulation of the old and new memory structure or memory storage and the mechanisms of the synthetic relationship of the systems of receiving, retrieving, sorting, analyzing and assembling, and it was not initiated within the technical media and means of visual transmission. As for its second axis, it is the composite image in the artistic form and it is the same image realized within the technical display field (the surface that transmits the mental image) which is called the artistic surface - which is the ceramic surface according to Saad Shaker - and it is the active space that achieves the expressive and aesthetic values of the artwork, which vary and diversify according to the direction, performance and means of display.

Through this, we see that the formal formulations in Saad Shaker's ceramics take us from the beginning to the mental image and the innovative imagination that planned the act of accomplishment in advance. I point out here, and according to the reception of Saad Shaker's ceramics, that his system of imagination was based on the act of metaphor, and subjecting the borrowed reference to the deconstruction of its first elements, and proposing new and alternative elements. Saad Shaker's system of imagination seems to have proceeded according to design rules that are not devoid of mathematical and analytical engineering, for the images of the memory store and the referential metaphors.

The formal system in Saad Shaker's ceramics is based in its compositional system on systems of interactive associative relationships, part and whole, as the form is organized in the ceramic genre by the action of the expressive and aesthetic pressure, and then the artistic knowledge that proceeds, rising to the limits of analysis and reconstructing, with awareness and intentionality will on the part of the ceramist, and we see it charged with the intentionality of imagination for the composite image of the visual action, to represent a structural formal system in the ceramic achievement, and thus the ceramic scene is transformed into a programmed scene according to mathematical algorithms or by the manufacture of artificial intelligence according to contemporary expressions.

According to (Dr. Zuhair Saheb) - this is the structure of creativity in art, it has aspects and characteristics (individuality and uniqueness) throughout history. It is the artist (Saad Shaker) himself presented in the form of a creative work, through which he expresses his inner happiness, and diversifies the creative, non-recording tendency, which sought in organizing the forms, to reduce the visible phenomena, to confirm the independence of the pure forms.

It is the creative self of the ceramist Saad Shaker, imposing a system on the forms, arriving at a style that allows him more freedom to fulfill his psychological needs, and interpret the countless of his personal characteristics. This is because (his expressionism) is based on rebuilding the world in its secret, internal state, so the nature of the phenomena no longer has any significance, except to the extent that they transform to reflect a human condition.



Flowers from my memory
Date: 1974
Size: 20x20x18 cm
Technique: low-temperature glaze



Compass
Date: 1970
Size: 20x27x8 cm
Technique: low-temperature glaze



Letter Hani
Date: 1972
Size: 40x40x10 cm
Technique: low-temperature glaze

Saad Shaker announced through his innovations in the art of ceramic that he was able to create a revolution in the way of dealing and thinking in form and content with the art of ceramic, in addition to his explicit affiliation with high abstraction. Here he indicates to his students and fellow ceramists that the art of ceramic is far from realistic representation, basing his statement and his vision on the phrase of Herbert Read (that the art of ceramic is one of the most difficult arts because it is one of the most abstract).

Saad Shukns ceramics were characterized by a design style, but it was a design that enjoyed freedom not required by certain obligations, but we find him presenting his design vision, according to a formal tendency with compositional formulations based on the system of ceramic experience in clay and structural performance, in addition to the purity and clarity of color in the glaze, and this indicates the high awareness and skillful mastery of the ceramist Saad Shaker of the tools of his ceramic formulations, in addition to the richness of his mental image system that we find transforming the shapes in his ceramic compositions, moving from the simple in the formal systems to the complex in the level of aesthetic presentation where analysis and recomposition.

Perhaps the composite image in Saad Shaker's ceramics is a dominant feature in his productions. He did not treat his ceramics with a spirit of futility or chaos, nor with immediate directness in action. Therefore, we find him an engineer in the ceramic industry in form, performance, and complex visual content. This places us before two truths in his ceramic productions: the composite image in his creative imagination, and the composite image in his ceramics as a formal application. In other words, Saad Shaker opens two doors for us in his ceramic formulations: one is the door to research into prior knowledge of the material accomplishment, which here lies in the area of imagination and the mental creation of the composite image. The second door is into dimensional knowledge, that is, the material accomplishment of the ceramic piece and its sensory reception.



Sphinx
Date: 2007
Dimensions: 30x30x18 cm
Technique: low-temperature glaze



The Circle
Date: 2002
Dimensions: 30.0x34.0x8 cm
Technique: low-temperature glaze

The required plate size was (52 cm), and the techniques ranged between planning with oxides and drawing, relief sculpture, and relief, as this type of vessel, the plate, was chosen due to its historical and functional dimension, and its greater connection to human life, as this participation created a new climate in the transition from the painting based on the plate holder, to the space of porcelain and pottery, hollow shapes, and deletion and addition operations, which gave imagination and multiple options to venture into modifying such vessels, and presenting them in a style that suits The beauty of the shape and design, and the (plate) became an aesthetic act hung on the wall after it was specifically for food.

Therefore, the Raku technique is considered one of the techniques with special effects that give a formative and artistic character to the artwork. In the current era, it is considered one of the alternative and advanced techniques that enrich the formative surface with color and its spontaneous transformations under the influence of different temperatures and the duration of reduction with organic materials. It can be said that Raku in its meaning is (color shock) that gives unexpected colors every time, different smoky lines, and a rich rhythm to the formative surface and decorative elements in the structural composition of the formative painting.

To clarify, there are two separate types of raku: Normal raku Technique and Naked raku technique. The former focuses only on colored oxides and some glazes and their variations during carbon monoxide reduction, such as iron oxide and copper oxide. The artwork appears as a sketchy portrait drawn through the blue glaze in one direction, with raised strokes of clay like brush strokes.

Drawing with a feather is the basis, as it is the one that made drawings in all civilizations. These pens are made of graphite, with different degrees of hardness and softness so that they do not fly away during burning in ovens at different temperatures, because they are made of clay, and heat resistant materials, in addition to colorants.

The second type: It is called Naked Raku, it focuses on the outer clay crust that is placed on the pottery surface with different thicknesses, and after burning and reducing with organic materials, it produces branched and smoky effects on the surface as a type of drawing called smoking drawing, and the drawing process can be applied by deleting part of the clay crust on the surface of the vessel for an element, an animal, human or plant shape, and after burning, these lines absorb into the deleted place to give the black smoky color. So the goal is for the black smoke to penetrate the clay in some places, because the naked raku allows the pure black to affect the white with a suitable visual contrast, where we notice the method of coloring with colors or pigments called mica, which is a mineral used in cosmetics for its distinctive shine, and it is a glazing element as it can withstand low temperatures suitable for naked raku, and the saggar clay technique, and ferric chloride saggar.



Normal Raku Technique
2014 AD, drawing and painting, Normal Raku
52 x 52 cm



Portrait of the artist Said Shaker, ceramic bust
Artist name: Saman Shabab, Portrait
Work year: 2020

Technique: Deletion and addition with a pencil, sand drawing with black iron oxide on the surface of a plate baked at a temperature of 1020°C
Documentation name: artist Dalia Shaker



Dalia Shaker, 2020, 52 cm, red sand
Black Oxide and Glaze



Deep Al-Azawi, 2020, 52 cm, 52 cm, glass



Al-Hamad Al-Ahmed, 2020, 52 cm, Iron Oxide

Artists have realized that painting on a pottery surface requires prior knowledge of oxides and glazes, and that painting on a pottery surface differs from a glazed surface in terms of application and treatment. Just as we paint on canvas, we paint on the color on the surface, and this is governed by multiple circumstances and factors.

One of the important techniques in drawing and painting that is currently used is raku ceramic techniques. This is the name of a process that we now know of in rapid firing at a temperature of up to (1000 degrees Celsius), whereby this technique focuses on the shock it causes to the surface, which arouses in us the aesthetic importance of the form, and clarifies the depth of the expressive concept.

Ceramists with Fire and Clay

After the meeting of the Syrian ceramist (Dr. Zahid Taj Al-Din) with the Kuwaiti ceramist (Ali Al-Awad) in London, he said to him: "We are brothers in fire and clay" and it was the first meeting and acquaintance on the ground, these words really attracted me a lot, because of the closeness of man to clay and its scientific composition which contains silica, ammonia, water, oxides, lime, magnesium, potassium, and some organic materials that mix with it, forming different colors white, red, yellow and other colors, which are similar to man in his skin and creation, so how could it not be, as man is a being created from clay as God Almighty said in Surat Al-Mu'minun, verse number (12): (And We have certainly created man from an extract of clay).

So he belongs to this land, the soil was mixed with water, and became wet clay like dough, there is a similarity between the cells in the soil and between man, this spiritual closeness and overlap between them is what occupies our emotions towards working with clay and enjoying it, this relationship was defined by God Almighty in Surat Al-Hijr No. (26) when He said, "(And We have certainly created man from clay like pottery, from altered black mud)", And the black mud is the clay that changes to black, and there is another verse in it: "(And We have certainly created man from clay like pottery)", Surat Al-Rahman No. (14), and it is the hard clay that has not touched fire, so it is like pottery, and therefore we find this emotional exchange between clay and fire, and between clay and man, which is the secret of the spiritual relationship between the two, and the eternal love for them.

So ceramic is a physical experience. As we shape our own mass, fresh, muddy aromas fill our airways. Kneaded like dough to form, the wet clay stains the palm of your hand as you knead it between your fingers. Imagine, ceramist!!!, the many lives this clay has lived. Did it not come from nowhere? Who collected it? How many hands has it shaped? With your body and expression, this clay is a human being just like you.

Shaping with our hands calls for our presence!!! It is impossible to focus our attention on anything other than the (clay ball) in our hands, because ceramic makes us feel closer to ourselves, completely unrestrained by pressures, because in the ceramist's hand, the clay ball turns into a vessel for expression, a channel for feelings, and an artistic painting for the soul. As the fingers shape and form, the mind finds salience in the rhythmic dance between thought and action. With every gentle pressure, tensions fade, and there an intimate dialogue is formed between (fire and clay) to silence the chaos of the age, and creativity takes its place. Also, in the embrace of ceramic we find comfort, and rediscover simple pleasure.

The simple truth is: clay is the finale of human existence (earth, water), and ceramists are not intimidated by this material. While ceramists regain their appeal in spontaneous, atypical ways, we witness experiments with materials and techniques, from delicate ceramics to complex and simple glazes, for the love of clay and when realizing that aesthetic energy, something awakens in us, and we can then integrate the tale of eternal love between us.

In the simplicity of ceramics there is a sacred message: by embracing wisdom and creation, deep thought, expression and hope, we can manufacture a new path, past and present, so let us continue to emulate clay and fire to become one heart, the furnace of life, in which these ceramic tales are shaped.

In this third part, we review the most important ceramists, in a comprehensive manner. They are ceramists with fire and clay, who form their concepts, their deep, mysterious, and frank thoughts with their tools, with their souls and feelings, with their hands and minds, so that their artistic achievement speaks.



PART THREE

Ceramists with fire and clay

“Cosmic Energy” (Corals)

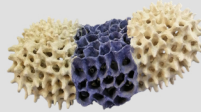
Nature is the most important source of visual vision to be sought in his formal aesthetic discourses, and as Mahmoud Bassiouni said: “Nature is not an end in itself, but rather a means that helps in new discovery.” (Bassiouni, 1994), and the history of art confirms that nature was a source of artistic inspiration, whether the artwork was an imitation of nature, a simplified imitation of it, or a special abstraction of its elements. (Riyadh, 1973).

Shanyar Abdullah pointed out that dealing with our visual vision as a receiver of energy, because art is considered one of the most important sources of revealing these energies on which our cosmic world is based. Art also has the ability to discover the beauty and meaning hidden in these energies, including ceramic, which is the interrogation of the skillful frequencies of cosmic energy by implanting the spirit in clay and glazing the fire. This explains that the artist considers aesthetic energy to exist in the being of the being in nature. Everything that surrounds us, whether plants or animals, is considered elements from which the artist derives sensory signals, formal and color relationships, so that he arranges and formulates them in the structural composition, design foundations, compositional systems, and geometric laws represented by the universe. Coral reefs are rock formations in which marine organisms and plants live, and they are of various types in their forms.

Shanyar Abdullah usually executes this type of shapes using small coils, called the weaving spun method, just as birds build their nests or insects build their homes. It is a method that requires a long time and enough patience, and thus the artist achieves (rhythmic contrast) in colors. The ceramic work is either of one or two colors, and in this way he shows us the color separation and structural beauty between two types of structural fabric in the clay. The first is thick, pointed, needle-like surfaces, and the second is small, thin slabs that gather in the middle of the wall horizontally or vertically in a way that is consistent with the geometric shape (square, rectangular). On the other hand, visual balance is achieved in linear and color relationships. The artist uses gas to burn these ceramic works, reaching 1250 Celsius.



Coral SS_2022 30cm height 45cm width 18cm depth 2022 Qm Kln, 1200C



Coral SS_2022 30cm height 45cm width 18cm depth 2022 Qm Kln, 1200C

Cycle of Life

Shanyar Abdullah is distinguished by the rich composition of the square and the hemispherical shape; because he sees in them his vague elements, his privacy, and his world charged with symbols, meanings, and vocabulary filled on the ceramic surfaces. The surfaces and textures have infinite sanctity, and the spherical shape has the forces of gravity distributed, where the rotation and the center are. The hemispherical shape may represent many shapes according to the artist's vision in his mental store, his philosophy in perceiving the shape, and his analysis of reality, which is reflected in his ceramic achievements. So what does the ceramicist want to present through these shapes, and what excites and inspires him in building them?

The circle is «the idea of the harmony of the universe, and the transformation of creation into existence», as the circular shape indicates fertility, femininity and birth. Among the artists who were interested in the spherical shape is the late plastic artist (Qatibba Nouri), who said: «The circle and the ball fascinate me because I feel that all living beings, including me, are founded in us, the ball and the circle». However, the subject of the spherical shape, the hemisphere, the oval and other derivatives of this shape, is a subject that depends on a technique of relationships that anticipate the final achievement of the plastic artwork. We notice in the works of Shanyar Abdullah a repetition of some decorative elements, which are considered a specificity that confirms his mark, but with diverse rhythms, as the decorative elements dialogue with the wall of the geometric shape, and give it a spirit and movement, and a more contemporary touch. It is compatible with its rotation and fluidity, horizontally and vertically, to coexist and adapt to it as if it were a part that was missing from it, and this connection indicates the professionalism of the artist's imagination to generate a ceramic work that he was searching for in his intellectual store.



(Regular and Irregular) SS_2022 22 cm.
Qm Kln, 1200C



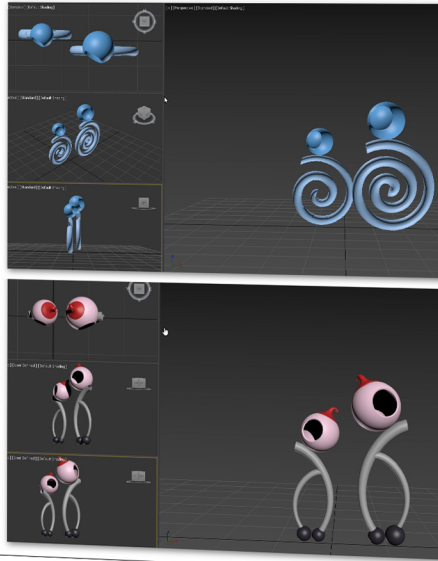
(Regular and Irregular) SS_2022 20cm x 20 cm.
Qm Kln, 1200C



STAR TUNED
2017
55" x 42 cm
Dry glazing technique



SARBA AL-SHAHEE AND SARBAH 2017
50" x 45 cm
Dry glazing technique



The different techniques of these works (normal raku, naked raku, metallic luster, pit fire...) are a way to make the material speak, the works of art are round, they become like lips that pronounce the letter waw, a mandatory form in every motherhood, however, it is not a pleasure to accept the cracks in them caused by the premature birth of the work, of course fire has its laws, earth and water too, however, there is no law in creation that transcends the subjectivity of the creator, the cracks indicate its fragility, the material itself, a crack free of care, hardening, and remains free of care towards these things, disturbances, sadness, accidents, unexpected departures from which man cannot escape, and therefore his work carries itself, which he seeks to hide by all technical and other means, and certainly the unpredictable lies in waiting, happiness is a necessity of chance. We cannot do anything against the dynamics of the creative process, She imposes her intellectual approach, through her creative hand.

The intellectual and cultural aspect of the artist Linda goes back to (slow birth) through movements and vibrations that all condense and expand in circular, spiral shapes that refer us to several symbolic and formative meanings, and existential questions; the human being reproduces through the sperm and the egg to give the fetus which is life, and thus the woman is the symbol of life, she is (Helios), and in Greek mythology she is the goddess of the sun, she is light, the universe and water, and in the middle of the work there are thin slabs that appear to the observer to be fragile and easily breakable, but they challenge the obstacles of matter, and this is a break in highlighting the duality of fragility and stability, movement and stillness, and the process of life.



«The Goddess of Mineral Water», 2018, Luster Technique, 130x130 cm, 70x70x15 cm



«In Agony», metallic luster, 2018, 70x70x7



«Helios», 2018, Luster, 40x40x13 cm



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Yacoub Al-Atoom A lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Design, Department of Ceramics, University of Jordan. A member of the International Academy of Ceramics, Geneva, Switzerland. Author of a documentary book entitled «Contemporary Arab Ceramics», 2023. He participated in numerous Arab and international forums in China, Turkey, Romania, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Taiwan, Italy, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

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Mohammad (Abu Al-Eisso) A visual designer and artist, graduated from the University of Jordan Faculty of Arts and Design in 2024, holding a Bachelor's degree in Design and Visual Communication (Multimedia). His practice spans graphic design, web design, film production, and photography. He previously worked as a designer at Dot Media Company, and currently serves as a producer and designer in the Media Office at Ibn Al-Haytham Hospital. Among his most notable works is the design and photography of the annual book of Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II University.

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