

CERAMICS NOW

M A G A Z I N E



May 2025

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Front cover: Eun-Ha Paek, Duck Lips #3, 2024, Glazed ceramic, 9 H x 6.5 W x 4.75 D in. Image courtesy of Yubo Dong.

Back cover: Installation view, Eun-Ha Paek: Plumage at Stroll Garden, Los Angeles, 2025. Image courtesy of Yubo Dong.

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Philsoo Heo

Philsoo Heo (b. 1993) is a South Korean ceramic artist currently based in Halle and Essen, Germany.

Heo's artistic practice explores how individuals perceive their lives, particularly in relation to interpersonal relationships and social tensions. Drawing profound inspiration from nature, he adopts an ecological perspective that transcends anthropocentric viewpoints. Firewood frequently appears as central metaphors in his practice—represented as wounded beings in his ceramic sculptures—to articulate sentiments of unrest, emotional void, and the fragility of human existence.

Rather than embracing the societal push for relentless positivity without direction, Heo advocates for a conscious process of introspection and emotional healing. He believes that acknowledging one's wounds is the foundation for personal transformation and trust. His artworks aim to offer moments of quiet solace amidst the fatigue and alienation of contemporary life.

Heo earned his Bachelor's degree in Environmental Art and Design in South Korea in 2018, and later completed a Master of Fine Arts in

Ceramics and Glass at the Institute for Artistic Ceramics and Glass (IKKG) at Koblenz University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Since earning his Master's degree, Heo has continued his artistic practice through various ceramic residencies. From 2024 to 2026, he is advancing his research on his artworks as part of his Meisterschüler studies under Professor Martin Neubert at the Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design in Halle, Germany.

His work has received multiple recognitions in Germany, including the Apolline Prize from the GRASSI Museum in Leipzig and Second Prize at the BKV Prize in Munich (2024). He was also awarded "Talents – Masters of the Future" (2023), the Second Prize at the Richard-Bampi Prize, and a Special Prize at the Frechener Ceramics Award (2022). In 2024, several of Heo's works were acquired by the GRASSI Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Leipzig and the Meissen Porcelain Museum for their permanent collections. His works are also held in various private collections.

Visit **Philsoo Heo's** website and Instagram page.

<https://www.philsoohea.com/>
@kunst_heo





Inner Universe, 2024. Stoneware, Slab construction, free-handbuilding, and imprint technique, multi-layered glaze, oxidation firing at 1240 °C, 77.5 x 55 x 33 cm



Unite, 2023, Meissen porcelain, Free-handbuilding, glazed, 35 x 67 x 38 cm



The indescribable vitality, 2023, Meissen porcelain, Free-handbuilding, partially biscuit, cobalt blue underglaze painting, Luster, 26 x 45 x 27 cm



The power of change, 2023, Meissen porcelain, Free-handbuilding, partially biscuit, cobalt blue underglaze painting, Luster, 12 x 13 x 12 cm

Hanna Miadzvedzeva

Hanna Miadzvedzeva is a visual artist specializing in ceramic sculpture. Originally from Belarus, she relocated to Poland for political reasons and now lives and works there. Hanna creates abstract ceramic sculptures that evoke meditative landscapes and emotional states, drawing on the rhythms of nature and her own experiences of solitude and reflection. Her work explores self-perception through form, where scale is intentionally ambiguous. She studied ceramics at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, where she completed her bachelor's, master's, and graduate studies, and later taught for seven years in the Academy's Ceramics Department.

Since 2019, she has actively participated in international symposia, exhibitions, and residencies, including the Guest Artist Residency at the Senter for Keramisk Kunst in Ringebu, Norway (2024); the Foundation Bruckner Residency in Carouge, Switzerland (2024); the European Ceramics Festival Terralha in Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, France (2024); and the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park Residency in Japan (2024), among others.

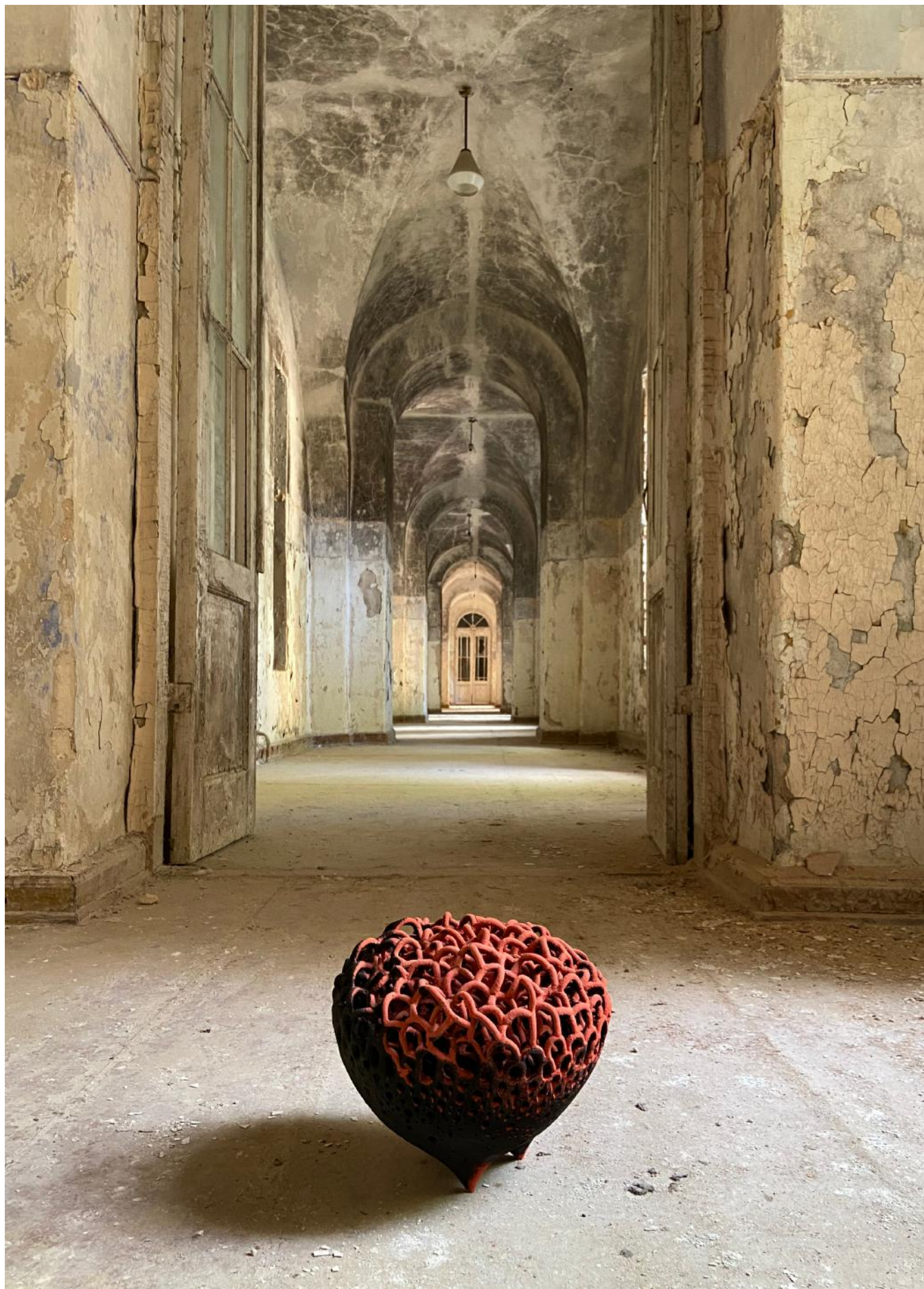
Miadzvedzeva has received several awards for her work, including First Prize at the 2024 European Ceramic Context (Bornholm, Denmark); the Dowstone Special Award at the Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennale (China, 2023); the Gold Prize at the 1st Yatai Lotus Mountain Prize (Changchun, China, 2019), and a Residency Prize at the Officine Saffi Award 5, (Milano, Italy). Hanna's artworks are held in several public collections, including the Guangdong Shiwan Ceramics Museum (China), the Mark Rothko Art Centre (Latvia), the Keramik Kunst Museum (Germany), or the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park (Japan).

Visit **Hanna Miadzvedzeva's** website and Instagram page.

<https://www.hanna-miadzvedzeva.com/>
[@miadzvedzevahanna](https://www.instagram.com/miadzvedzevahanna)



Rain cradle, 2021, tinted stoneware, glaze, 26x18x22 cm, Photo Hanna Miadzvedzeva



Structure in red, 2021, stoneware, glaze, 26x18x22 cm, Photo Hanna Miadzvedzeva

Alice Shields

Alice Shields (b. 1984) is a British ceramic artist whose practice explores themes of walking, materiality and sustainability as a means to investigate the mapping of a place and our ability to form deep emotional connections to it.

Using clay as a collaging tool, she presents her walks in the form of layered strata, with each material component reflecting an individual element of the walk and landscape she moves through. Clays and glazes are used in various states of malleability, providing opportunity to elicit connections to site and perhaps recognisable qualities found there. She will often raw fire her work, welcoming their unpredictable outcomes. She regularly incorporates elements of previous work within her sculptures as well as recycled waste matter. These choices provide endless circularity to her processes and material supplies. Finding ways to be as sustainable as possible has become a more pertinent framework to work within.

Alice received her MA and BA (hons) in Ceramic Design from Bath School

of Art and Design in 2018 and 2008 respectively. She has exhibited at galleries and institutions across the UK and internationally including the Southbank Centre and Royal Academy of Arts in London. She was shortlisted for the 15th Westerwald Keramik Prize, Germany, in 2024. In 2023, she co-curated the group exhibition 'Disruption, Direction', presenting a body of work produced as a result of monthly peer group support. She was the recipient of the Ganes Trust grant in 2018 and artist residency at The Garage, Bristol, in 2023.

Alice Shields is director and co-founder of the co-working ceramic studio, Clay Shed, in Bristol, UK. She presents courses, curates visiting artist talks, and provides professional development opportunities for clay-based makers and artists. She has taught ceramic education to adult learners since 2018 across a range of organisations.

Visit **Alice Shields's** website and Instagram page.

<http://www.alice-shields.co.uk/>
@_aliceshields



BS8 3AD.1, 2023. Porcelain, Stoneware, Glaze, 12.5 x 11 x 8 cm. Photo by Guy Marshall-Brown



BS2 0TQ.7, 2024, Porcelain, Stoneware, Ceramic Materials, Repurposed ceramic, 10 x 8 x 8 cm. Photo by Alice Shields

Yuriy Musatov

Yuriy Musatov is a Ukrainian artist who, after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022, was forced to relocate to Spain. In 2024, he received the 2nd Prize at the International Biennale of Ceramics in Manises for his work Saint Alien. Musatov was born in the small town of Konotop in northern Ukraine, where he studied at a local children's art school. He later attended the Sumy Higher School of Arts, where he was introduced to ceramics. From 2002 to 2008, he studied at the Lviv National Academy of Arts.

Before the outbreak of war, Musatov lived and worked in Kyiv. He taught ceramic art to young talents and organized exhibitions for his students. In 2019, his solo exhibition *Invasion* was held in Kyiv, where he presented his groundbreaking *Aliens* series for the first time—works that marked a turning point in his artistic journey. *Invasion* was an exhibition born out of a premonition of something inevitable.

Since 2017, he has been a member of the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC) in Geneva and the National Union of Artists of Ukraine. Musatov actively participates in international symposia, biennales, and group exhibitions. Since 2012, he has held over 20 solo exhibitions and participated in more than 100 group exhibitions, including *Migration(s)* at the Musée Ariana – Swiss Museum for Ceramics and Glass (Geneva, Switzerland), Yingge IAC

Members' Exhibition – New Orientalia at the Yingge Ceramics Museum (New Taipei City, Taiwan, 2018), the 18th Biennial de Ceràmica d'Esplugues (Spain), and the XII Biennial of Artistic Ceramics (Portugal).

Over the past seven years, several Musatov's ceramic works have been acquired by major international museums and collections, including the Musée Ariana (Switzerland), the Ceramics Museum in Ludwigsburg (Germany), the FuLe International Ceramic Art Museum (FLICAM, China), the National Museum of Slovenia, the Aveiro Municipal Museum (Portugal), the National Open-Air Museum of Ukrainian Pottery (Ukraine), and the Panevėžys Civic Art Gallery (Lithuania).



Saint Alien, 2023. Stoneware, glazes, 69 x 41 x 31 cm (2nd Prize, Manises Ceramic Biennial)



Sharif Farrag: Hybrid Moments at Jeffrey Deitch

By Cammi Climaco

By the time Covid protocols were over in 2021, Ceramics was at its height of popularity. More and more fine artists were using it as a medium, Instagram had created a community of ceramics gazing, and Seth Rogan built a home studio. When the Clay Pop show, curated by Alia Dahl (née Williams), opened at Jeffrey Deitch it was right on time. It was a big deal; the unimaginable happened to ceramics, a material villified for decades as being too “craft,” now a giant group show at Jeffrey Deitch. Dahl had put together a show of some of the best ceramicists in the country. Many had that California Davis Funk feeling: humor, pop culture as subject matter, cartoon characters out of context. Personally, the Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, Genesis Belanger, and Sharif Farrag pieces stood out.

Since that show, I've become a big fan of Farrag's work. From Clay Pop, it makes total sense for Farrag to have a solo show at Deitch. It's the gallery which understands and celebrates the confluence of culture: street art, fashion, and New Yorky underground stuff, while, concurrently, being dead serious about art.

When I went to the gallery, I thought I was going to run in, see this show, then go live my life. However, once inside, I immediately learned it wasn't going to happen. I literally had to slow down my New Yorker brain. The show is a mix of vessels and sculptures with surfaces absolutely covered in content, horror vacui covered. Once in, piece by piece, I got totally swept up in the complexity and wow factor of the work. Looking at each piece became almost addictive. If you skim this work, you'll miss the whole experience.



Installation views, Sharif Farrag: Hybrid Moments, Jeffrey Deitch, New York, March 8–April 19, 2025. Photos by Genevieve Hanson. Courtesy of the artist and Jeffrey Deitch, New York.

There's a Mies Van Der Rohe saying, "God is in the details," which is used in art all the time. What's seductive about Farrag's pieces is his approach to multi-layering surface and content. Each piece is a 360-degree world with levels of information, and it goes deep. Farrag himself is multi-dimensional: Egyptian, Syrian, American, and Californian. He talks about the physical, spiritual, and political worlds, often in the same piece. A vessel could be about American Egyptomania, the underworld of gods and demons, animals in nature, love, mental and physical health, sunshine, skateboarding, stress or traffic.

In this show, New York City is often a character in the work. There's a triptych of wall tiles, "Bridge," where a multilayered figure in the center tile holds a snake in each hand. Inside the snakes are human figures trying to get out. How did they even get in there? Each snake points to either the darkness of the city or the lightness of Los Angeles. As a long-time resident of NYC coming out of winter, I'm right there in the sunlight, drunk on Vitamin D.



The Temporality of Creative Thinging: Movements Captured in Clay

By Anne-Brit Soma Reienes and Per Ditlef Fredriksen

Who or what is the source of creativity when working with clay? In this essay we reflect on the outcomes of a collaboration between a ceramic artist engaging in performative pedagogy and an archaeologist working with contemporary material knowledges. Seeking a common conceptual ground, we explore the unruly outcomes of creativity in and through a series of selected ceramic works by Anne-Brit Soma Reienes.

A key trait in several of Anne's multi-component works is the growing and branching inwards from the fringes of seemingly disobedient organic elements, thereby disturbing the planned, systemic order at the perceived centre. The wall piece *Under the Moon* from 2021 (Figure 1 – featured image), consisting of 15 ceramic tiles, offers an illustrative example.



Figure 2. Details of tile preparation. The 15 tiles comprising *Under the Moon* are hand-built in stoneware-clay, bisque-fired, glazed and then fired again (up to 1260 C). The work measures 129 cm x 214 cm. Drawing of the templates was a vital part of the preparation process. Photos by Anne-Brit Soma Reienes

The transformative movement caught while unfolding is a contrast and a looming threat to the neat order. Was there any order here in the first place? Or, alternatively, perhaps what enters from the outskirts are just elements of another form of order, one that is captured in a flicker of time while in the process of re-entering the world it has been expelled from? Is all this planned organisation just a snapshot of an abstract, externally floating idea that never really made it into our everyday lived-in worlds, a futile, short-lived exercise until something deeper and older reclaims its domain?

Curiously, this image also speaks to the creative process that brought *Under the Moon* into being. The meeting between movements and gestures of the human body and the clays' material properties (Figure 2) propelled into an unruly growth of organic shapes and trajectories that extended beyond the spatial confinement of a singular tile, resulting in a multi-pieced assemblage. Anne's own exhibition text sought to capture the act of making as resembling a moon-lit walk in the forest: a kind of stumbly wayfaring where the creative material process unfolds while thinking, reading and writing:

Perhaps everything revolves around the transition between body, perception, material, drawing and words. Seeking scripts and signs as fingers shape the clay. Writing forms. Sculpting surfaces. Crafting clay poetry. (...) Like wandering through the forest, under the moon, without ever arriving.

For us, the richly textured image of organic overflow across tiles, and our inquiries into the process of its coming into being, resonates with archaeologist Lambros Malafouris' (2014) concept of creative 'thinging' and, more specifically, what he calls 'the feeling of and for clay'. Significantly, for Malafouris, creativity is not the materialisation of some preformed idea. Rather than searching for external agents or constituents, we should approach the creative process of making as a dynamic interplay where "material and human agency are coupled with each other and allow action to gain a 'life of its own'" (Malafouris 2014: 151).

Engaging with a small selection of Anne's works from this perspective, the following text is the result of two researchers' crossing paths. We come from different disciplinary backgrounds but share a long-term interest in ceramic arts and crafts. This includes a curiosity about the outcomes of bodily engagements with materials – in Anne's case these materials are predominantly clay and driftwood. However, while *Under the Moon* and other works discussed here allude to unruly materiality and the temporality of artists' bodily movements, there is also another key element for us pedagogues to take into account: the sociality of learning. That is, the fine-woven social fabric between makers and materials, between skilled teachers and learners and, not least, between performing artists. Our crossing of paths across disciplines results in a series of mutual, friendly interventions into our respective material knowledge and, thereby, also into how we approach materiality.

Under the Moon

For more than two decades, Anne has explored the hand-built tile as a medium for larger, multi-component ceramic displays. *Under the Moon*, which has been exhibited twice in Norway, is the most recent work made this way. Initially shown as the title piece in a solo exhibition in 2021, it also appeared the following year as part of the collaborative arts and crafts exhibition *Persepsjon* 2022.

The way of working can be traced back to when Anne moved from the urban centre of Oslo to a small village near the shores of Lake Mjøsa almost 25 years ago. This changed Anne's ceramic expression in profound ways. The matte, white barium glaze originated as a way to perceive interior landscapes. The need to explore the dim whiteness of the inland light, which differs significantly from the sharper coastal light she had known from growing up in southwestern Norway and later living near the

Oslo fiord, led to years of exploring various modes of glazing, eventually resulting in the particular glaze composition used to create *Under the Moon*.

A distinctly modelled order emerges as the assembly of tiles become interconnected by sculpted lines. This stimulates the perception of organic movement captured in static matter, the fired clay. The continuum expelled under the moon is an intended illusion, of arrested movement in a hostile yet soft landscape where nothing grows. This imagery draws inspiration from Norwegian author Torborg Nedreaas' classic novel *Nothing Grows by Moonlight* (orig. 1947, English trans. 1987).

The tiles are all hand-built on a wooden plate, which then also defines their outer dimension. Bit by bit, clay is fed into and onto clay, slowly filling the spaces from the centre of the wooden plate and outwards, following the path of a spiral.

This spiralling technique ensures stability and prevents the tile from bending or cracking in later stages of the ceramic process. A subtle, soft texture emerges from the traces of clay being pressed by fingers into and onto clay, thereby embedding the lines made on the surface in organic patterns that resemble moss branches (No. 'reinlav').

The resulting unruly lines, growing 1.5–2 cm out from the tile surface, offer the glaze separate square spaces to unfold within – and beyond. Poured over the bisque-fired tile while it is held up vertically, the various layers of glaze lead to either a slightly transparent or an opaque expression, and sometimes, in some smaller areas, the thicker layer of glaze 'shrinks' and reveal the red clay. The glaze and the textured surfaces intertwine. The white glaze holds its breathing body, supporting the lines, and it is up to the beholder to figure out whether the resulting textured image is of something that implodes or expands.



Figure 3: Reverberance modelled in stoneware-clay and, like the tiles, glazed and fired in high temperatures. The individual shapes vary in size, the largest measuring 28 cm in height, 17 cm wide and 26 cm deep. Photos by Yumiko Ashley and Anne-Brit Soma Reienes



Collecting in Context: The Fred Marer and Forrest L. Merrill Collections

By Nancy M. Servis

“The point of art is not to make maps but to adventure.”¹

– *Jim Ede*

The nature of collecting can be described as an impulsive urge, a planned strategy, or a cultural wayfinding. Whether by museums or individuals, collecting objects has been practiced intentionally or informally for millennia. The cabinet of curiosities developed in fifteenth-century Europe held oddities from around the world, signifying the private collector’s prestige. Solely possessing objects is one collecting motivation. But for others, there is something more.

Jim Ede was a mid-twentieth-century impassioned collector living in Cambridge, England. Over sixteen years, he created an inspiring venue for contemporary art known as Kettle's Yard. It was his home with his wife, Helen, from 1957 to 1973, which evolved into their art-filled dwelling and gallery space. Various objects reflecting Ede's love of nature and art were thoughtfully arranged in a livable manner, not valorized in a sanctified space.² Ede welcomed visitors weekly, especially students, to discuss the pieces on view and wander the four interconnected cottages and second-story expansion. Though professionally experienced with the conventions of museums, Ede envisioned a quiet realm "where young people could be at home unhampered by the greater austerity of the museum or public art gallery."³ Interspersed paintings, sculptures, period furniture, and ceramics in Ede's former home, now under the auspices of Cambridge University, offer a refreshing sense of discovery. At Kettle's Yard, art is not a status symbol or a financial investment but rather a haven for personal connection to artists and their shared stories, evoking a specific time and place.

Like Ede's Kettle's Yard, Fred Marer's and Forrest L. Merrill's ceramic collections capture their moment in time and place and illustrate their personal approach to collecting. Both men bought work directly from artists, local galleries, and exhibitions and were frequently at kiln openings to select choice work. Their first purchases as budding collectors served as an introduction to the medium from which their fine collections developed. Their holdings represent a groundbreaking era of ceramic development in both Northern and Southern California. As eyewitnesses and active participants, Marer and Merrill are defining collectors who recognized the transformational time when clay use on the West Coast radically changed. California's ceramic history offers an exceptional opportunity to appreciate the artistic diversity and vision of ceramic makers. The accomplishments of regional and international practitioners in the Marer and Merrill collections illustrate with distinction the artistic clay use in California and beyond.



Cultivating Clay at Scripps College

"The historic Scripps Annual...has provided yearly pathways to advance an engaging discourse in the ceramic arts."⁴

– *Peter Held*

The Scripps College Ceramic Annual is the oldest continuously running exhibition of contemporary ceramics in the United States. It has a respected exhibition history dedicated to exploring, documenting, and celebrating the ceramic arts. From its initial show in 1945 to today, the ceramic annual has featured potters, sculptors, and installation artists dynamically engaging the material, often driving it to new heights of expression.

William Manker established Scripps' ceramics department in 1935, teaching both at Scripps and at Claremont University College (now Claremont Graduate University)⁵. Manker also organized exhibitions of ceramics at Scripps' Lang Art Gallery that developed into the ceramic annual. Richard B. Petterson followed Manker as the college's ceramic instructor in 1947. Petterson's ceramic innovations and contemporary programming influenced young ceramic students such as Harrison McIntosh and Rupert Deese. Internationally recognized potters Bernard Leach from England and Shōji Hamada from Japan came to Scripps to give lectures and throwing demonstrations during their popular tours of the United States. Antonio Prieto and Marguerite Wildenhain, revered ceramic artists from Northern California,

also visited the school.⁶ Petterson continued the ceramic annual through 1958, when Paul Soldner assumed curation. Joining the Scripps faculty in 1956, Soldner was on the cutting edge of ceramic practice in the United States with his adaptation of the raku firing process, and he infused the ceramic annual with exciting work by his contemporaries. Soldner's curatorial tenure ended in 1991 after his retirement in 1990. For the next three years, Noboru Nagasawa oversaw the exhibition, drawing on the concept of installation art.

Since then, the era of guest curators has sustained the ceramic annual for nearly thirty years, beginning in 1996. Contemporary artists have organized exciting shows featuring inquisitive works by artists from across the nation, and historians and curators have provided insightful perspectives through their selections. As a result, the Scripps College Ceramic Annual continually has served as both a provocation and a beacon to artists, scholars, collectors, and students in the ceramics sphere. Its extensive influence for eighty years is unique to art and exhibitions, fostering new and daring clay use statewide, with a broadening influence beyond geographic boundaries.





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Recognizing the Moment

"I bought what I liked, practically always from people I liked."⁷

– Fred Marer

The heart of Scripps College's ceramics collection, the Marer Collection of Contemporary Ceramics is rich in work made by the Otis group.⁸ It was given to the college over many years due to Marer's friendship with Soldner. During the early 1950s, not long after Marer began acquiring works, Soldner started teaching ceramics at Scripps, where he also curated the ceramic annual for nearly forty years. Their paths seemed fortuitously intertwined as their friendship assisted Marer's donations to the college. As Soldner recalled, "Fred Marer is...another perfect example of one who approaches collecting from the best reason, out of curiosity and love of it. He never thought about selling it or making a living from it."⁹ At the time of Marer's death in 2002, he and his wife, Estelle, had gifted more than 950 pieces to Scripps, including vessels, sculptures, tiles, and experimentations in clay. His stated motivation was straightforward: "We felt it should go to a friendly place. We like the people there.... We thought it would get lost in a big city."¹⁰ He chose to provide an accessible context for students and the community rather than lose sight of his ceramics in the depths of a museum. As a mathematics professor at Los Angeles City College, Marer was an inquisitive collector whose selections were guided by affordability,

insight, and friendship, regularly visiting regional colleges like Otis College of Art and Design nearly every week to see artists' latest work.

Marer's first purchase was a teapot by Laura Andreson, one of the country's leading potters of the day.¹¹ Trained as an educator, she established the ceramics program at the University of California, Los Angeles, and was introduced to Marer by Pauline Blank, who also taught at Los Angeles City College. This first purchase of a functional vessel served as a gateway for Marer, whose collection grew to include the work of many artists who shifted the direction of clay from the vessel to interpreted sculpture. Anecdotes surround the origins of Marer's collection, such as Marer's introduction to Peter Voulkos. Marer was intent on buying a specific work he had seen at an exhibit, but it had disappeared. As John Mason recalled, "Fred Marer wandered down one day and talked to Pete. Apparently, they had some conversation by telephone. Fred had seen a piece of Pete's in a display cabinet and wanted to know if he could buy it. Pete said, sure, come on down.... [H]e was a man that was curious about the world, and he did collect some art. By the time he got down to purchase the piece, it had been stolen. So Pete says, that's all right. You can get something else."¹²



Tontouristen Kollektiv: What can be found in the gap between the different clay narratives?

By Tontouristen Kollektiv

A contemporary and popular idea about clay and ceramics is of a romantic character. It is associated with slow movement, the field of small-scale business, handmade juxtaposed to industrial, therapeutic, and healing: a justified way to navigate in this time of heavy materialistic and commercial reality. Clay is also mistaken to be sustainable, harmless, and 'pure' – a material untouched by industrial processes or ecological consequences.

These preconceptions are, of course, not completely false or wrong, but clay is a much more complex material than this. Clay is also a globally traded commodity, shipped around the planet for a multitude of purposes and products. This trade is far from innocent when it comes to carbon emissions, environmental and ecological impact as well as social exploitation and injustice.

We find ourselves as ceramic artists in this gap between the two extremes of how the story of clay is perceived. We became aware of a blind spot in our knowledge.

We didn't know very much about the origin of the clay we buy in bags from our retail shop. Tontouristen Kollektiv created platforms for artistic investigations and conversations around this blind spot. We are a ceramic artist collective exploring the intrinsic narratives of clay through artistic research and site-specific practice. Based in Sweden, we investigate the complex material journey of clay – from extraction to use – through video, sound, movement, and writing. Most clays used in Swedish studio pottery come from the Westerwald area in Germany. The stoneware deposits in Westerwald are among Europe's largest and highest quality ones.

In Höhr-Grenzhausen (Germany) one can observe multiple perspectives on clay production coexisting simultaneously: the city's numerous monuments tell about the clay mining, pottery production and kiln firing. The public art is all made of ceramics. Characteristic blue and grey, often salt-glazed, pots are used in the most imaginative ways. An annual pottery market gathers potters and tourists from all over Europe. Westerwald Ceramic Museum is a well-known institution in the ceramic communities all over the world. IKKG – Institute for Ceramic and Glass Art is a university with a high artistic profile in the middle of the town. However, pottery production, once dominating the town and finding its wealth, is now diminished. Throughout the city, empty shop windows and closed family businesses bear witness to a more significant past.



The surrounding area has around fifty active clay mines as well as uncountable inactive, recultivated or abandoned mines. The distinguishing features of Westerwald stoneware are its high density, hardness and durability. The clay pits contain a wide variety of colors and qualities of clay. Around twenty different clays can be found in a single pit. The best qualities of clay are found in the deepest layers of the mines.

On average, the clay extraction pits are around thirty meters deep. The deepest pit is located near Meudt and is up to ninety meters deep. Clay mining changes the landscape drastically. In Germany, it takes many years to obtain permission to open a clay pit, as everything has to be approved by the authorities, including recultivation after the pit is closed. Two-thirds of the mined clay goes to the production of industrial wares.

In spring 2023 Tontouristen travelled around the area. We could not believe our eyes the first time we saw a clay mine (named Esther). It was so much larger than we had ever imagined. The various colors of the clay were beautiful and appeared almost surreal against the backdrop of industrial activity. A few days later, we had the opportunity to visit the largest pit and drive down to its bottom. A constant flow of blue trucks were driving up and down the roads on the side of the mine. There was an enormous gap in perspectives between the small ten-kilo bag we used to open in our studios while standing at the bottom of a massive clay pit.

In the clay factory, we learned about the energy-consuming process of making clay and producing grog. The clay needs to undergo several stages: sorting, drying, crushing, mixing, extruding and packing before being shipped all over the world.

As energy prices rise and regulations around opening new mines tighten, clay is likely to become more expensive, and with the high-quality deposits in Westerwald potentially depleted within 300-500 years, the future of ceramics raises critical questions – will clay become a scarce, high-priced commodity?

We emphasized the practice of gathering information with all our senses, using sound recordings, photos, videos, words, movements in nature, and writing as our tools. The resulting work *Deposit* is a three-channel video, where different aspects of mining are reflected upon: the nature, the factory, and the mine. We explored the interconnections between these elements within the clay extraction process. What caught our attention the most was the interference with natural habitats and the lasting scars in the landscape – changes that cannot be overlooked and reversed.

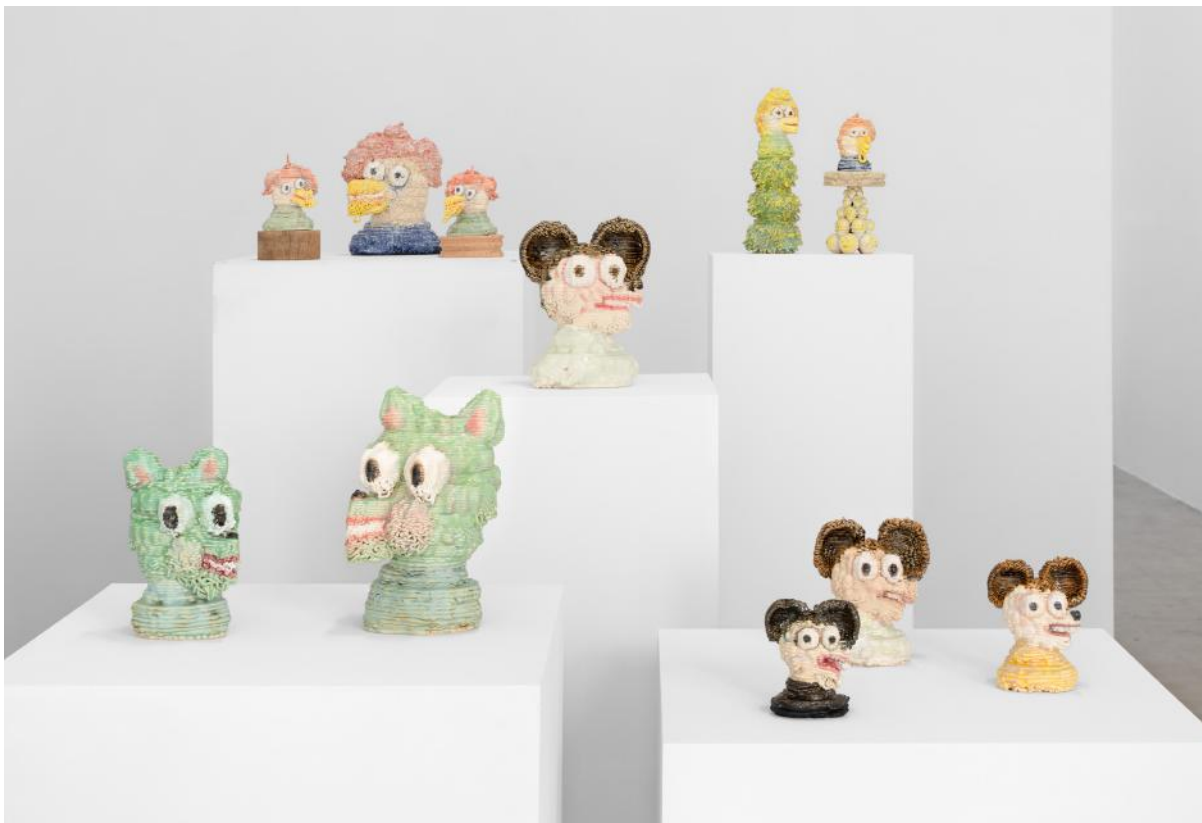
In the spring of 2024, we returned to Westerwald and were invited as guest lecturers by the IKKG to work with a group of students for some weeks. We asked the performance artist and researcher Dr. Nathalie S. Fari to lead a week of experimenting workshops where we learned ‘Body Mapping’ – bodily interventions as methods to find new layers and stories. Together, we explored the old Kannofer, a historic and one-of-a-kind kiln for salt firing at the university’s property and, later, the pottery market in town. The method of ‘Body Mapping’ was helpful for seeing ceramics with new eyes.

During these weeks, we made our second work, “Mine is mine”. The film was produced as a series of connected sequences performed and filmed around the clay mines. Access to the clay mines is strictly prohibited, both for active sites and those that are temporarily or permanently inactive. The numerous signs telling us to keep out were triggering, almost inspiring. We filmed on the rim of a big mine. Like the grass and shrubs, we could overlook the mine but not enter it. The atmosphere felt very special; we asked ourselves, ‘Are we intruders, or are we nature?’ We tried to identify with nature who is just waiting to take back the ground, slowly and invisibly trespassing.



Eun-Ha Paek: Plumage at Stroll Garden, Los Angeles

April 5-26, 2025







Stroll Garden is pleased to present *Plumage*, a solo exhibition featuring a new body of work by Eun-Ha Paek. Inspired by the social, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic preoccupations surrounding hair, *Plumage* features over twenty works including polystyrene foam sculptures, polymer clay “paintings,” and 3D printed ceramics.

Partially animated by the artist’s affinity for poodles and their sculptural haircuts, this new series tests the delicate and complex interactions between vanity, control, kitsch, and cuteness, particularly when it comes to self-fashioning and reinventing oneself through hair.

From the story of Samson and Delilah to the contemporary trope of getting a new haircut after a major life change, one’s hair is often equated to one’s identity. During the artist’s childhood, Paek was taught the Confucian idea of filial piety, that one should avoid cutting one’s hair as it is an extension of your parents and would be akin to damaging their flesh and bones. The weight of this symbolism led the artist to wear her hair short for a long time.

In traditional Korean paintings, the artist was struck by the subjects’ elaborate hairstyles that looked like they “were wearing little poodles on their heads.” The wigs, called “gache,” were intricate constructions only worn by wealthy women in the Joseon period (1392-1897), weighing between six to nine pounds. Paek recalls reading about a woman who broke her neck after standing up too suddenly due to the weight of her gache.

Drawing from these visceral images and visual associations, *Plumage* features vibrant clay works fashioned through different techniques that investigate the dissolution of the status quo, the duality of feeling, and the weighty pressure of influences—from the societal to the ancestral.

In the artist’s own words: “Hair bears the weight of symbolizing beauty, status, wealth or on the other side, strife. My hair went partially gray in college after a traumatic event—it seemed to happen just like in the movie *Nightmare on Elm St*, where the main character wakes up to find her hair had gone gray. The world was so normal, even though it could be terrible. This dissonance made me wonder if I just imagined the terrible. The gray proved to me that it wasn’t all in my head because something in the outside world had also changed. It was a strange comfort. This show is about uncomfortable happinesses and strange comforts, unbearable weights and letting go.”

Eun-Ha Paek was born in Seoul, Korea. She received a BFA in Film/Animation/Video from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her animated films have screened in the Guggenheim Museum, Sundance Film Festival, and venues internationally. Grants and awards include the Center for Craft Teaching Artist Cohort Grant, Windgate Scholarship and Rudy Autio Grant from the Archie Bray Foundation, and a Travel and Study Grant from The Jerome Foundation. Her work has received mentions in *The New York Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Vogue Living* and G4 Tech TV. Residencies include EKWC, Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, Center for Contemporary Ceramics, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and Archie Bray Foundation. She teaches at Parsons School of Design and Greenwich House Pottery.

Bente Skjøttgaard: Nature and Glaze at CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark

April 6 – October 26, 2025





The Month's News In The Ceramic Art World

01

Our Founding Editor, Vasi Hirdo, is curating an exceptional contemporary ceramics exhibition, *Alive & Unfolding*, part of Ceramic Art Andenne. Opening on May 17 at Le Delta in Namur, Belgium, the exhibition features the work of 22 artists from 14 countries: Jasmin Anoschkin (FI), Natalia Arbelaes (US), Emily Yong Beck (US), Eric Croes (BE), Claire Curneen (UK), Sien Godderis (BE), Faye Hadfield (UK), Mahala Hill (AU), Myung-Joo Kim (KR), Ahryun Lee (KR), Claire Lindner (FR), Hélène Loussier (FR), Martin Neubert (DE), Irene Nordli (NO), Sayaka Oishi (JP), SunYoung Park (KR), Paolo Porelli (IT), Elsa Sahal (FR), Bente Skjøttgaard (DK), Carl Richard Söderström (SE), Johan Tahon (BE), Anne Wenzel (NL). The exhibition presents a vibrant collection of sculptures that challenge the boundaries between the figurative and the abstract, inviting viewers into a poetic world where human, animal, and cryptic forms come alive.

02

This month, Ceramic Art Andenne presents the *Perspectives festival*, a major event dedicated to ceramic art taking place over several weeks in Andenne (Belgium) and the surrounding area. The triennale features eight exhibitions showcasing Belgian and international artists, an international ceramics market, conferences, children's activities, performances, and guided tours. Discover the full schedule on ceramicartandenne.be

03

Applications are now open for the XIX CERCO International Contemporary Ceramics Award, to be held between September and November in Zaragoza, Spain. The award is organized every two years within the CERCO Festival and offers several prizes, including the CERCO Award (€6,000). The competition is open to all ceramic artists from around the world and has no thematic restrictions. Registration is open until June 11, 2025.

04

The Kikuchi Biennale XI Ceramic Competition outline has been announced, and applications will be accepted online between June 1-30, 2025. The biennale exhibition will take place at the Kikuchi Kanjitsu Memorial Tomo Museum, Tokyo, between December 13, 2025 and March 22, 2026. Several prizes will be awarded, including a Grand Prize worth ~\$14,000. Application fee: ~\$42.

05

Ceramic brussels fair invites artists based in the European Union to apply for the 2026 ceramic brussels art prize, an annual award for contemporary ceramic creations. The ten laureates will be exhibited in a group show during the fair's next year's edition, and several prizes will be awarded, including a solo show, an international residency, and/or an acquisition. The call is open to artists not represented by a gallery and with less than ten years of experience and research in ceramics. Applications are due May 21, 2025. Application fee: €25.

06

Applications are open for the 4th Blanc de Chine International Ceramic Art Award (China). Held every two years, ICAA aims to bring together the world's outstanding ceramic artists, and to rethink, define and extend the dimensions and depth of ceramic art through innovative white porcelain works. Several prizes will be awarded, including a First Prize worth €50,000. Applications deadline: July 31. The exhibition will take place in January 2026.

07

Applications for the 2025 Sydney Ceramics Market are open until May 18. Held annually in October, the fair showcases the work of over 100 ceramic artists and potters, from striking sculptural pieces to functional tableware. Participation fee: starting from \$1000. <https://sydneyceramicsmarket.com/apply>

08

The Ceramic Studio's Guest Potter Workshops begin in May at their stunning location in Brenchley, Kent (UK). Designed for both beginners and experienced makers, the series offers a rich variety of workshops led by acclaimed potters. Participants can explore techniques such as wheel-thrown porcelain, Mishima decoration, glaze making, slab-building, tableware design, clay collage, and more. Whether you're looking to develop new skills or deepen your practice, there's something for everyone.

09

The current John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, WI) artist-in-residence, E. Saffronia Downing, invites artists to contribute to a collaborative project by sending foraged wild clay. Submit a quart-size zip bag of unfired clay, along with a letter describing your foraging site and experience, to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (608 New York Ave, Sheboygan, WI 53081) by June 13, 2025. All submissions will be featured alongside Downing's residency exhibition, highlighting local connections to land and material.

10

The June Steingart Art Gallery at Laney College (Oakland, CA) is now accepting submissions for Stoked: Wood Fired Ceramics, a national juried exhibition dedicated to the fiery art of wood-fired ceramics. This exhibition aims to bring together the most compelling examples of this age-old ceramic technique nationwide. Submission deadline: June 30, 2025.

11

Artists and curators from across the US and worldwide are invited to apply for NCECA's 2026 Exhibitions. Submissions are now open for the NCECA Annual Exhibition: Absence Takes Form, the 2026 NCECA Juried Student Exhibition, and Featured Exhibition proposals in conjunction with Volumes, NCECA's 2026 conference in Detroit, Michigan. The first deadlines are coming up in June. More information at nceca.net/exhibitions

12

Arts Mansfield invites artists based in Australia and New Zealand to apply for the 2025 Klytie Pate Ceramics Award. Now in its fifth year, the award honors the legacy of one of Australia's most influential ceramicists, Klytie Pate, and carries a biennial prize of 10,000 AUD. The exhibition will take place between September 19 and October 6, 2025. Applications are due June 27.

What's on View



The Whole World In Our Hands at The Stephen Lawrence Gallery, London

April 12 – May 17, 2025



Sean Gerstley: Free Play at Superhouse, New York

April 17 – May 31, 2025



RINN / 輪 Ireland and Japan: a dialogue on making, place and time at Embassy of Ireland, Ireland House, Tokyo

April 16 – May 20, 2025



Edouard Taufenbach & Bastien Pourtout: Contre espaces at Galerie Lefebvre & Fils, Paris

April 1 – May 23, 2025



Hector Mavridis: Formations in Jumble Jams at Galateea Contemporary Art, Bucharest

April 16 – May 18, 2025



Sergei Isupov: Moments from Eternity at District Clay Center, Washington, DC

April 25 – May 25, 2025



Damien Fragon: Atoms in our Eyes at Nendo Galerie, Marseille

April 24 – June 7, 2025



Jing Huang: Among Colorful Clouds at Adamah Ceramics, Columbus

May 3 – June 28, 2025



Sawada Hayato: Giving Form to Color at Joan B Mirviss, New York

May 2025



Eun-Ha Paek: Alters at HB381 Gallery, New York

May 2 – June 14, 2025



Sculptures Sigillées at Centre Céramique Contemporaine de Giroussens, Giroussens

April 19 – June 15, 2025



EXTRA-NATURE: António Vasconcelos Lapa at Musée Ariana, Geneva

April 11, 2025 – January 4, 2026

