

CERAMICS NOW

M A G A Z I N E



April 2026

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Front cover: NAKANE Gaku, Contemplation on Borders, 2025, h36×w54×d53 cm. Grand Prize of the Kikuchi Biennale XI: The Present of Ceramics. Photo credit: S&T Photo

Back cover: Helmie BRUGMAN, David XVIII, 2025, h115×w40×d30 cm. Merit Prize of the Kikuchi Biennale XI: The Present of Ceramics. Photo credit: S&T Photo

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Japheth Asiedu-Kwarteng

Japheth Asiedu-Kwarteng is an artist and educator based in Edinburg, Texas, where he leads the ceramics program at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg campus. He holds an MFA in Ceramics from Illinois State University, USA, and a B.A. in Industrial Art (Ceramics) from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana.

Japheth has exhibited widely both locally and internationally in esteemed institutions such as the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (Beaumont, Texas), Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (Salt Lake City, Utah), Crocker Art Museum (Sacramento, California), University Galleries (Normal, Illinois), and DAAP Galleries (Cincinnati, Ohio). His works are part of the permanent collection at University Galleries and in private collections across the United States.

His artistic practice honors the legacy of Ghanaian ceramic history and its contemporary presence, drawing on complex cultural symbols with a spirit of openness and innovation. With over a decade of experience working with his favorite medium – clay – and a deep commitment to teaching, Japheth brings both technical skill and cultural sensitivity to the classroom and studio. Before moving to the United States for graduate studies, he served as a teaching technician at KNUST, Ghana. There, he was responsible for kiln and studio equipment maintenance, as well as sourcing and processing wild clay and glaze materials for the ceramics program. He has worked with and learned from notable ceramics professors, including Parpah Senanu Kwawukume and Jeannie Hulen,

and contributed to research into the production of electrical porcelain, tile cement, and crucibles using wild clay and locally sourced materials.

Japheth is passionate about community engagement. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, he joined a group of graduate students and an art history professor from Illinois State University to organize At the Table – a series of virtual dinners and conversations designed to foster community and vulnerability in a time of global isolation. The group developed discussion themes, recipes, and ceramic bowls, creating a space for empathy, camaraderie, and shared experience across different backgrounds.

Japheth is an elected member of the International Academy of Ceramics and has served as Fellowship Coordinator on the Artaxis Board. He also contributed to NCECA through its Collaboration and Engagement Committee, reflecting his active role in shaping the future of ceramics through education, advocacy, and community. He graduated as Valedictorian from the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts at Illinois State University.

Visit **Japheth Asiedu-Kwarteng's** website and Instagram page.

<https://japhethglobal.com/>
[@japheth_global](https://www.instagram.com/japheth_global)



Dining with Mama & Dada: Blood, 2025. *porcelain, mason stain, underglaze, 20 x 13.5 x 13.5 inches, Oxidation fired. Photo credit: Artist*



Dining with Mama & Dada: Golden, 2025, porcelain, stained porcelain, underglaze, 20 x 15 x 15 inches, Oxidation fired. Photo credit: Artist



Dining with Mama & Dada: Purity #1, 2025, porcelain, mason stain, 18.5 x 13 x 11 inches, Oxidation fired. Photo credit: Artist



Dining with Mama & Dada: Purity #2, 2025, porcelain, mason stain, 22 x 13.5 x 12 inches, Oxidation fired. Photo credit: Artist



Picking the Pieces Together, 2020, stoneware, underglaze, glaze, epoxy, 23 x 18 x 15 inches, Oxidation fired. Photo credit: Artist

My work engages with the profound legacy of Ghanaian ceramics, bridging its rich historical foundations with a bold contemporary vision. Drawing upon the intricate symbolism of Kente patterns in textiles and Adinkra motifs, I transform these culturally significant elements into a visual language that challenges traditional boundaries and redefines ceramic art on an international stage. By navigating the intersections of form, symbolism, and materiality, my practice interrogates the tensions between tradition and modernity, cultural preservation and innovation, as well as the dynamic exchanges that occur within and across cultures.

At its core, my research delves into the concept of space—both physical and metaphysical—as a lens for exploring transitions through borders, identities, and emotional terrains. My work functions as a monumental visual diary, chronicling experiences of navigating spaces that evoke a spectrum of emotions: loss, belonging, acceptance, isolation, and nostalgia. This diary embodies the universal human experience of crossing thresholds—whether geographic, cultural, or personal—and reflects my commitment to creating art that resonates across different contexts.

Through my practice, I seek to address profound questions. For instance,

- *How do the spaces we traverse shape our perceptions of identity (not as black or white, African or western, but as the self), belonging, and existence?*
- *In what ways do transitions impact on our mental and psychological well-being?*
- *How can art serve as a catalyst for community engagement, fostering social cohesion across diverse contexts?*

These inquiries are not merely theoretical, they are deeply personal. My body of work reflects the transformative journey of, for instance, parenthood, examining how this space of nurturing has reshaped my understanding of care, identity, and legacy.

I aim to spark dialogue around the universality of human experience while celebrating the specificity of cultural heritage. My work transcends traditional definitions of ceramics, incorporating innovative techniques and interdisciplinary approaches to amplify its relevance within the contemporary art landscape. By blending monumental forms, evocative symbolism, and rich cultural narratives, I contribute to a global discourse on the self, resilience, and the ways in which art can be a bridge to foster understanding across borders.

As an artist-scholar, I am committed to pushing the boundaries of ceramic art, championing its role in contemporary art, and fostering a deeper appreciation of cultural intersections. My work stands as a testament to the enduring power of art to connect, challenge, and inspire.

My work is predominantly ceramic freestanding and wall sculptures and installations that incorporate fabric (notably Kente), repurposed wood, metal and several other nonceramic materials and media. They are characterized by vibrant underglazes, slips, and manganese dioxide finishes in both oxidation and atmospheric firing techniques, particularly soda firing, to create surfaces that resonate with texture and depth.

I have been fascinated by how many Ghanaian ceramic artists such as James Kwame Amoah, Kofi Asante, Frederick Okai and many others have used and continue to use Ghanaian symbolism, like Adinkra, in many fascinating ways; and how artist like Piet Mondrian, Kurt Schwitters, Joel Shapiro, Faith Ringgold and Karel Appel render abstractionism and repurposed materials. I strive to create an aura through which multiple symbols of social significance coexist within space and time in my work. I am drawn to the dominance of mostly primary colors in the paintings of Piet Mondrian. His bold and block color composition resonates with the bold and vibrant colors of the Kente. I am interested in exploring the intersection between the abstraction of Piet Mondrian and Joel Shapiro and my style abstraction.

My sculptures incorporate fabric alongside industrial materials and tools—such as pallets, worn out kiln parts (including kiln elements, thermocouples, relays, cones), used saw blades, and other remnants of labor and production. These works vary in scale, from small pieces to expansive installations, and are presented as freestanding, hanging, or wall-mounted forms. I am particularly interested in surface treatments using underglazes and manganese dioxide, which allow me to explore contrasts between material histories, process, and aesthetic finish.

Jeanne Rimbert

Jeanne Rimbert is a visual artist/ceramist born in Paris in 1985. After completing a DNAP (Diploma of Advanced Studies in Art) at the Beaux-Arts in Rueil-Malmaison, followed by a Master's degree in graphic arts, her work has been presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including solo exhibitions at Galerie Premier Regard and Galerie du Haut Pavé in Paris, as well as at the Musée Ariana in Geneva.

Rimbert has participated in exhibitions at institutions and venues such as the Centre d'art contemporain Aponia, Eglise Saint Merry, and the Bastille Design Center in Paris, as well as in international projects in Italy and Belgium. She has taken part in major events and festivals, including the Biennale de céramique contemporaine in Vallauris, Ceramic Art Andenne, and Salon Révélation at the Grand Palais in Paris.

The interior spaces and exterior landscapes she encounters, through chance discoveries, are the triggers for her installation work. Sculpture thus becomes a way of fossilising an imaginary moment within a physical reality. Using earthenware or stoneware, the artist questions the place of ceramics in contemporary art. Clay becomes in turn painting, sculpture, installation, architecture or even performance.

Jeanne Rimbert deconstructs and reconstructs composite visions and fragments, thus modelling new landscapes. New universes that oscillate between the memory of what has been and the hope of what will be.

Visit **Jeanne Rimbert's** website and Instagram page.

<https://www.jeannerimbert.com/>
@jeannerimbert





The Sea Will Keep Our Memories, Ships, 2025. Glazed stoneware, tissue, threads, variable dimensions

Faye Papargyropoulou

Faye Papargyropoulou, born in Athens in 1974, is a ceramic artist and designer based in Athens. Since 1992, when she began her studies in art & design with a scholarship in industrial design, she has been exploring the connection between creativity, functionality, and artistic expression. With over 20 years of experience as a creative director at leading advertising agencies, she was responsible for the image and communication of major Greek and international brands, defining their branding and creative strategy. At the same time, she applied her artistic ideas to personal projects in fashion and interior design.

In 2006, she founded her own creative agency, ABOUT: CREATIVE AGENCY, specializing in design, branding, and projects related to fashion and interior design. In 2020, she took the next step in her creative journey by establishing her ceramic studio, CERAMIC 47. Based in Athens, CERAMIC 47 is her personal

space for artistic expression, where Faye creates unique ceramic works that highlight the beauty of imperfection and challenge traditional notions of form and functionality.

Her first complete collection, Migrated Forms, expresses her love for fashion, drawing inspiration from fashion patterns. The ceramic works from this collection, unique and multidimensional, were first presented in Athens in February 2023. She later participated in several group exhibitions, including “L’ÉTÉ GREC.” and “WOMEN CERAMIC ARTISTS OF GREECE” at the Moncoinstudio gallery. Today, Faye continues to evolve her ceramic art, focusing on creating unique pieces that explore the relationship between form, functionality, and expression.

Visit **Faye Papargyropoulou's** website and Instagram page.

<https://www.ceramicfortyseven.gr/>
@ceramicfortyseven



New Love #4, 2025. White & black stoneware clay. Mat white crawl glaze. 30cm L x 30cm W x 30cm H. Photo Credit: Apostolis Koukousas



From Fragility to Stability #05, 2024. Black stoneware clay and porcelain, 13cm L x 13cm W x 19cm H. Photo Credit: Apostolis Koukousas



Root, Stem, Flower: Syd Carpenter and the Cultivation of Collective Memory

By Chenoa Baker

Across institutions in Philadelphia, Syd Carpenter's work is currently presented through a rare, collaborative model that resists the isolating logic of the solo exhibition. Rather than positioning her practice as singular or retrospective, these concurrent exhibitions frame Carpenter's ceramics as part of a larger conversation about land, memory, and collective care. This moment feels particularly charged in Philadelphia, a city preparing for the United States' 250th anniversary while continuing to grapple with the erasure of African American histories from its public narratives. Carpenter's sustained focus on organic forms: roots, stems, vessels, and cultivated landscapes. These forms offer a counter-archive, one that insists on preserving ancestral knowledge through material and process. As the participating institutions collectively note, the "manipulation of clay is tied to empathy for the physicality of the human condition," positioning ceramics as embodiments of lived experience.

Seen together, these exhibitions suggest that Carpenter's prominence is through a deep investment in community. It's the first time that Carpenter's work has been shown with the included contemporaries. At the Frances M. Maguire Art Museum, *Re-Union* underscores this ethos by situating Carpenter's work in dialogue with that of her contemporaries. *Re-Union*, a possible nod to foundational American ideals, means to unite again. Carpenter curates a show as part of her three-solo shows in the Philadelphia area: a selfless and uplifting move by the artist. Flanked on either side of the visitor's center are two galleries with mustard yellow accent walls. The centerpiece of the exhibition, symmetrically on the far walls, and on pedestals below, are wall-hung and works on pedestals from Carpenter's *Stem* series. Her *Stem* series takes on an organic, bodily, vessel-like form. Even their names have health connotations like *Adjust Pressure to Normal* (2005), *Blood Ties* (2005), *Potion* (2004), and *Carrier* (2005). Conflating the ecological with the medical emphasizes the relational importance of what happens beneath the ground and the body. "[The Spiral] was inspired by the natural growth patterns of many plants, which ascend vertically in a spiral fashion..." she says. "My aim, therefore, was to translate this natural gesture into the sculptures, giving them muscularity and grace." Their surface ranges from a graphite-sheen, crust, rust-like texture, and green-oxidized-looking patina that mimic environmental exposure.



Installation views, *Re-Union*: Syd Carpenter, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Judy Moonelis, Sana Musasama, and Winnie Owens at the Frances M. Maguire Art Museum, St. Joseph's University, Merion, PA. January 14–March 29, 2026. Photos by Todd Rothstein.

Judy Moonelis's work introduces a different interpretation of the body. *Neural Home* and *Neural Greenhouse* function as altar-like structures: geometric frames animated by smaller ceramic forms that dangle, cluster, and hover. They have a weightlessness that wall-based or pedestal works don't have. Undercurrents of the mystical combination of clay with mixed media bring another dimension to Carpenter's exhibitions.

On the other hand, the only directly figurative work is by Winnie Owens Hart. Her work adds rounded forms and is the exhibition's most explicit confrontation. There are two wall masks from her 1978 *Scream... You're Black and in America* series. It is declarative and explicit in mining the Afro-Gothic. The masks have slit eyes and open mouths, similar to wide-ranging African traditions of performance-based emotive costuming or amulets for protection. This relates to the broader scope of the show that sculpts rage, refusal, and demands the need to be heard. That is an important part of memory and spiritual work that's a part of Syd Carpenter's cross-institutional shows.



Ceramic Brussels 2026 – Highlights From the Fair’s 3rd Edition

By Unu Sohn

Ceramic Brussels is a contemporary art fair focused on ceramics taking place in January, which held its third edition this year. I remember eyeing it with curiosity in 2025 and, eight months later, booking an apartment in May to visit the 2026 edition. It is an exciting event and the 2026 fair brings together mostly European galleries with exceptions limited to UK-based Han Collection, Japanese YOD Gallery, and NIKA Project Space that operates between the UAE and France. This year’s fair introduced a national focus on Spain, which my colleague Katherina Perlongo has written about specifically for *Ceramics Now*, following last year’s focus on Norway. Like many fairs, Ceramic Brussels held an awards ceremony as well as talks and book launches throughout the fair’s duration.

Coming from London, I was excited to see presentations by galleries I am unfamiliar with, or only connected to online, after a short two-hour train ride. The standout artists I discovered were Atsushi Mannami with local gallery Esther Verhaeghe Art Concepts and Berta-Blanca T. Ivanow with Spanish gallery Tramuntana. Mannami's work is of course largely in clay but also includes cardboard, zipties, and paper. One work features a L-shaped PVC pipe and a staircase while others depict ambiguous structures.



Réjean Peytavin at La peau de l'ours. Photo: Geoffrey Fritsch



Berta-Blanca T. Ivanow at Tramuntana Gallery



Xindi Tong and Ting Shen at CHAxARTxRTM.



Esther Verhaeghe at ceramic brussels 2026



Tramuntana Gallery at ceramic brussels 2026. Martin Pilette Prod



La peau de l'ours at ceramic brussels 2026. Photo: Geoffrey Fritsch

The award for best solo show was granted to SECCI gallery and artist Kevin Francis Gray. The award for best booth was given to Galerie Judith Andrae for a solo presentation of works by artist Janis Löhner. I'm not surprised that Löhner and his gallery were selected as the best booth because, whizzing through the fair on my way to a roundtable talk in another hall, this was the booth that stood out to me. Galerie Judith Andrae presented the most immersive booth with the installation of a communal shower featuring not only ceramic tiles but also five ceramic shower fixtures, soap holders, clothes hangers, and a yellow "CAUTION / WET FLOOR" A-frame sign. There is a silver urinal with pink cakes alongside both carelessly shedded garments and neatly folded ones sculpted in clay. Löhner's presentation of ceramics and drawings successfully explores queer culture, privacy, and the public eye. While ceramic tiles are an obvious choice, and the bathroom is a space strongly associated with the medium, the presentation felt cohesive and a commendable choice for exhibiting at an art fair. On Instagram, the artist reveals that the work was initially made for his first institutional exhibition, which explains the strong conceptual basis of the work.

On the topic of booth presentation, many galleries carved out ample breathing room for the artworks and the venue felt spacious although it was well-attended. While some galleries were filled with works, this tended to be an intentional curatorial direction rather than an attempt to maximize the number of works and therefore sales... and as for sales, they seemed very good. I saw several price lists with red dots and overheard gallerists engaging in conversations about availability in response to inquiries. I also witnessed how galleries would re-install their booths as artworks were placed in new homes. I had a close, admiring look at some majestic vessels depicting mountainous terrain by Korean artist Su-yeon Shin on the Saturday of the fair that were gone from the Han Collection booth the next day. Perhaps it would be smart to attend the fair early in its duration to make sure you see all the offerings made by the galleries.



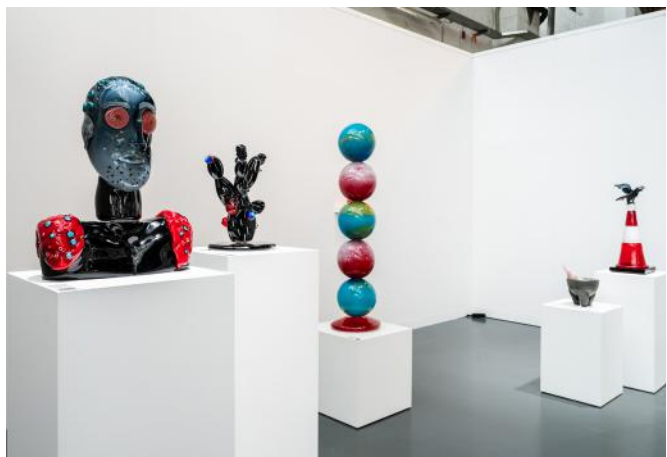
SECCI gallery, artist Kevin Francis Gray. Photo: Geoffrey Fritsch



Galerie Judith Andrae, artist Janis Löhner. Photo: Geoffrey Fritsch



Su-yeon Shin at Han Collection. Photo: Ye Studio



Al-Tiba9 Gallery at ceramic brussels 2026. Photo: Geoffrey Fritsch



ceramic brussels 2026. Photos by Geoffrey Fritsch

The fair itself was the perfect size with two halls filled with participating galleries and a third hall for publishers, talks, and a cafe with seating. I normally feel overwhelmed in these types of settings. In fact, my previous article for this publication described how I would disassociate nestled in amongst the booths of PAD London. I was fully prepared to experience the usual fair anxiety and overstimulation but I did not at Ceramic Brussels. It felt digestible, in the best way possible. I did, however, have trouble finding the entrance. The Tour & Taxis location turned out to be a Goliath venue containing a circus school, immersive Harry Potter experience, and spaces for activities like padel. I didn't see any signage for the ceramics fair but luckily, the Ceramic Brussels branding (font and yellow color) is consistent because I figured out the entrance soon enough. I overheard a confused couple looking for the fair on my way out and can imagine newcomers getting lost. It felt like seeking the door to a speakeasy bar. If you know, you know.

What is unique about Ceramic Brussels is that it showcases contemporary works. While other fairs largely featuring ceramic art seem to have a greater ratio of works by masters rather than living artists, the ratio seemed inverted at this fair in Brussels. There were many works by emerging and mid-career artists working in clay. Additionally, I noted that a large portion of galleries featured at Ceramic Brussels do

not exclusively work with ceramicists and normally exhibit art in a variety of mediums. Compared to Collect Art Fair here in London, the participating galleries at Ceramic Brussels occupy the contemporary art and fine arts sector more than craft and design, which is exciting. Unlike Ceramic Art London or craft fairs, artists are not individually responsible for upfront costs and the presence of gallerists elevates the works on view. One question I do have is about Al-Tiba9 Gallery. Frankly, I was confused. Why were they presenting a solo exhibition of exclusively glass sculptures? Please reach out to me if you have an answer. While some galleries were also showing paintings, photographs, and textile works, this was the only gallery in which the namesake material was absent.

The fair is 1000% worth a visit and the location in Brussels makes it convenient for many European countries, as well as post-Brexit UK that is a short flight or train-ride away. The city is fairly walkable and cozy in wintery January, an affordable time of the year to travel, and there's ample street food like frites and waffles. I expect more galleries from the UK and other countries beyond the EU in future editions. As someone who books holidays nearly a year in advance, I appreciate that the fair's founders Gilles Parmentier and Jean-Marc Dimanche have already secured and announced the dates for the fourth edition: January 20-24, 2027. See you there next year.

Unu Sohn is an artist and ceramicist based in London. She holds a master's degree in ceramics from the Royal College of Art.

The 3rd edition of ceramic brussels took place from January 21 to 25, 2026.



Spain in Focus at Ceramic Brussels 2026

By Katherina Perlongo

The 2026 edition of ceramic brussels came to a successful close, reaffirming its status as one of Europe's most important platforms for contemporary ceramics. Over five days at Tour & Taxis in Brussels, the fair once again demonstrated the breadth of the medium, from object-based practices to fully articulated sculptural positions, while continuing to negotiate ceramics' complex position between craft, design, and the visual arts.

This year, ceramic brussels placed a special focus on Spain with Focus España, bringing together a curated selection of Spanish galleries, artistic positions, and a program of talks. The focus highlighted the country's long-standing engagement with clay as a medium of artistic experimentation. The Spanish presence ranged from works rooted in traditional

techniques to contemporary approaches, forming a diverse yet coherent chapter within the fair. Seven galleries participated in Focus España: Al-Tiba9 Gallery, Barrera Baldán Galería, METRO, Osnova, Ponce+Robles & Jorge López Galería, and Tramuntana Gallery.

Serving as the opening gesture of Focus España, the tribute to Enric Mestre (1936–2025) presented a carefully selected body of works by the sculptor, who passed away last year. Initiated by ceramic brussels in collaboration with Modern Shapes Gallery and

supported by the Embassy of Spain in Belgium, the homage framed an artist whose contribution has been crucial in advancing the international visibility of contemporary ceramic sculpture and provided a symbolic and programmatic introduction to the fair. As one of the leading figures of the Spanish school, Mestre is mentioned alongside artists such as Jorge Oteiza and Eduardo Chillida. Initially trained as a painter, he turned to ceramics before fully embracing sculpture, gradually leaving functional forms behind.



Enric Mestre at ceramic brussels 2026. Photos by Geoffrey Fritsch (1-4), and Martin Pilette Prod (5)

His austere, architectural sculptures – often boxlike, slab-built forms dominated by right angles – combine interlocking geometries with carefully balanced proportions to create objects that are both precise and poetic. Mestre’s work evolves through a sustained process of reduction and concentration, producing forms that evoke chambers, silos, sepulchers, deserted arenas, and empty piazzas: architectures that appear closed off yet emotionally charged. As Román de la Calle has observed, they convey loneliness and introspection, embodying spaces where memory and inner dramas might unfold.

On the fair floor, these sculptures were carefully lit, allowing their interplay of light and shadow to fully emerge, transforming the works into meditative, poetic, and emotionally resonant spaces. Far from being defined by function or material tradition, Mestre’s forms assert themselves as spatial creations with full sculptural and conceptual autonomy. Placed at the outset of Focus España, the homage did more than honor a singular artistic legacy. It established a clear interpretative framework, presenting ceramics as a sculptural medium fully embedded in the discourse of contemporary art rather than as a peripheral or hybrid discipline.



The Language of Ornament: Frances Priest at Blackwell

By Sarah Rothwell

Sit high above the banks of Windermere in the English Lake District, is Blackwell Arts and Crafts House, the former holiday home of the Manchester industrialist Sir Edward Holt (1849–1928). Designed by British architect and artist Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott (1865–1945) at the turn of the last century, the house was conceived during a period of renewed interest in artisan crafts and the handmade that countered growing mechanisation and mass production. Subsequent changes saw the family giving up the house, it being used as a school for evacuee's during the second world war, and finally as offices. Blackwell, and its richly decorated interior showcasing the best craftsmanship of the Arts and Crafts Movement both locally and from across the UK, was only saved from being a distant memory thanks to the Lakeland Arts Trust, who restored the house to allow it to be opened

to the public as a period house and gallery in the early 2000s. Upon encountering Blackwell, you cannot help but be captivated by its beauty. The often watery Cumbrian light traverses through the space illuminating the interior so that your eye travels from the wonderfully carved ornamental wooden panelling to the stained glass windows, and from printed wallcoverings to ornamental plasterwork that reflect and play homage to the surrounding natural environment. The House's orientation allows every window to frame and capture the distant fells beyond. It is a truly special location in which to celebrate creative endeavours, both historical and contemporary. It therefore seems fitting, that this architectural gem of the British Arts and Crafts Movement has become the setting for the first UK retrospective of Edinburgh-based ceramic artist Frances Priest. For over twenty five years, Priest has been exploring decorative motifs, form, and movement, creating sculptural ceramic artworks that have become widely recognised and celebrated for their reverence to ornament.

Frances Priest: Motif | Line | Colour brings together over 60 works of ceramics, drawings and artworks from across her making career, into the intimate and historic setting of Blackwell, allowing for a range of exchanges between the viewer and Priest's work that is beyond a typical gallery exhibition experience. We do not encounter her work in isolation set within a minimalist white cube, but through encounters integrated into the rich interior spaces of this Arts and Crafts home.

It is as if her artworks are part of the fabric of the building, or artifacts of past custodians, allowing for direct correlations between her practice and the legacy of ornamentation she celebrates. Through their placement in this Arts and Crafts tableau, we see the artist's eye directing these encounters. Some could be easily overlooked but bring such joy upon their discovery, such as her work *Shift Intersect I* placed in the window well of the house's porch. Its form echoes the movement of the stained glass flowers and birds in the panel behind, and its subtle colour nods to the slate floor you stand upon. Others directly draw our attention to decorative motifs present in both the interior and artwork, as seen in the positioning of *Gathering Bowl – Collage* medium situated below the printed hessian wall covering with their echoing daisy motifs in the dining room. In turn, the Cumbrian landscape beyond the windows beneath which seven of her *Patterns of Flora* vases sit, illuminate and create sympathetic shadowing to the botany she has stunningly illustrated upon their surfaces. Whereas her new series of works created for the White Drawing Room and named in honour of this space, nestled within the decorative integrated shelving by Baillie Scott, feel as if they are part of the original decorative gesso scheme in their delicate tracery of shared motifs of leaves and chevrons and powdery surface treatment. Elsewhere, the gallery display does not follow a specific timeline or key events but creates moments of discussion between the past and present, gallery series and public commissions.



Frances Priest: Motif | Line | Colour. Exhibition installation at Blackwell – the Arts & Crafts house. Image credit: Robin Zahler



Undergrowth: Ceramics, Ecology, and Alternative Futures

By Tana West

Walking into the County Hall Pottery gallery space, you are immersed in the purple haze, which sets an otherworldly chromatic tone to the exhibition. In the middle of the gallery is a lilac-coloured grid, with the floor and walls of the same colour. This contrasts with the ceramic work, which is placed on platforms within, on and under this grid. The exhibition design forces you to bend, peer, stretch and move amongst the structure to encounter the works, drawing you physically into the undergrowth. Curated by Elizabeth Jackson and Emily Stapleton Jefferis, this exhibition grows out of a mutual interest in undergrowth as both a conceptual framework and a living ecosystem, informed by speculative fiction, vegetal philosophy and embodied material knowledge.



Engaging imagination and material understanding to contemporary environmental concerns, *Undergrowth* brings together artists who use clay to build open, associative narratives rather than straightforward representation. They exemplify the rhythms, resilience, and mutual entanglements of ceramic object making and vegetal thinking. The work in the exhibition interacts with the structured grid, the ceramic objects resist this uniformity, organic forms break free from this constraint. This is where the unseen energies of the natural world emerge as quiet, powerful presences within the gallery space.

There is a strong curatorial idea in *undergrowth* as a concept, to create a narrative space that holds complexity and vitality, *undergrowth* as what persists beneath the visible structures of society. Ideas and processes create a dialogue between language, nature, and the physicality of the material at the unruly margins. We can see this reflected in the processes involved in making the ceramic sculptures. Through attentiveness to material, this sensitivity allows transformations that link the tactile process of making with ecological endurance. Ceramic processes disrupt the idea that clay and other substances are passive—there to be shaped, altered, and controlled. When you engage with ceramics, you enter into a reciprocal relationship with vibrant matter. Clay is a material that cannot be disentangled from both human narratives and nature, rooted in the deep materiality of geological time. The very act of making or remaking lends itself to thinking through speculative new ways of being in the world, of relationships with the non-human and a resistance to fixed conceptual binaries. It lingers in the in-between, literally and figuratively transforming meaning and matter.



The First Ceramicists: Ancient Clay Structures Built by Bees

By Kelly Parks

I've spent twenty years watching ground-nesting bees on my Montana property, observing how they select sites, assess soil conditions, and engineer their brood chambers with a precision that rivals any studio potter I know. When I learned that paleontologists recently discovered 20,000-year-old bee nests preserved inside fossilized bones in a Dominican cave—tiny clay structures with smooth, waterproofed walls that predate human pottery by millennia—everything clicked into place (Viñola-López et al., 2024).

These ancient bees were ceramicists. Not metaphorically—literally. They were working clay, solving material problems, creating durable structures thousands of years before humans picked up their first handful of mud.

Bees as Material Specialists

Here's what most people don't realize: only about 10% of bee species build the wax honeycombs we picture when we think "beehive." The other 90%—roughly 4,000 species in North America alone—are ground-nesters who excavate tunnels and shape brood chambers from clay-rich soils (Michener, 2007).

The recently discovered fossilized nests from Hispaniola's Cueva de Mono tell us something profound about bee intelligence. Named *Osnidum almontei* by researchers, these 6-millimeter structures show smooth, multilayered walls created by compacted soil and sealed with a waxy secretion that waterproofed the clay—a technique so effective that CT scans revealed six generations of bees reusing the same cavities (Viñola-López et al., 2024). The bees didn't just dig randomly. When they encountered fossilized rodent jawbones with empty tooth sockets, they adapted their plans and used these ready-made chambers instead of excavating new ones.

This adaptive behavior happened because the surrounding karst limestone landscape lacked the fine-grained, stable soil that ground-nesting bees typically need. So they moved underground, where owl pellets had accumulated sediment over thousands of years, creating workable clay deposits (Viñola-López et al., 2024). Material assessment. Site selection. Problem-solving.

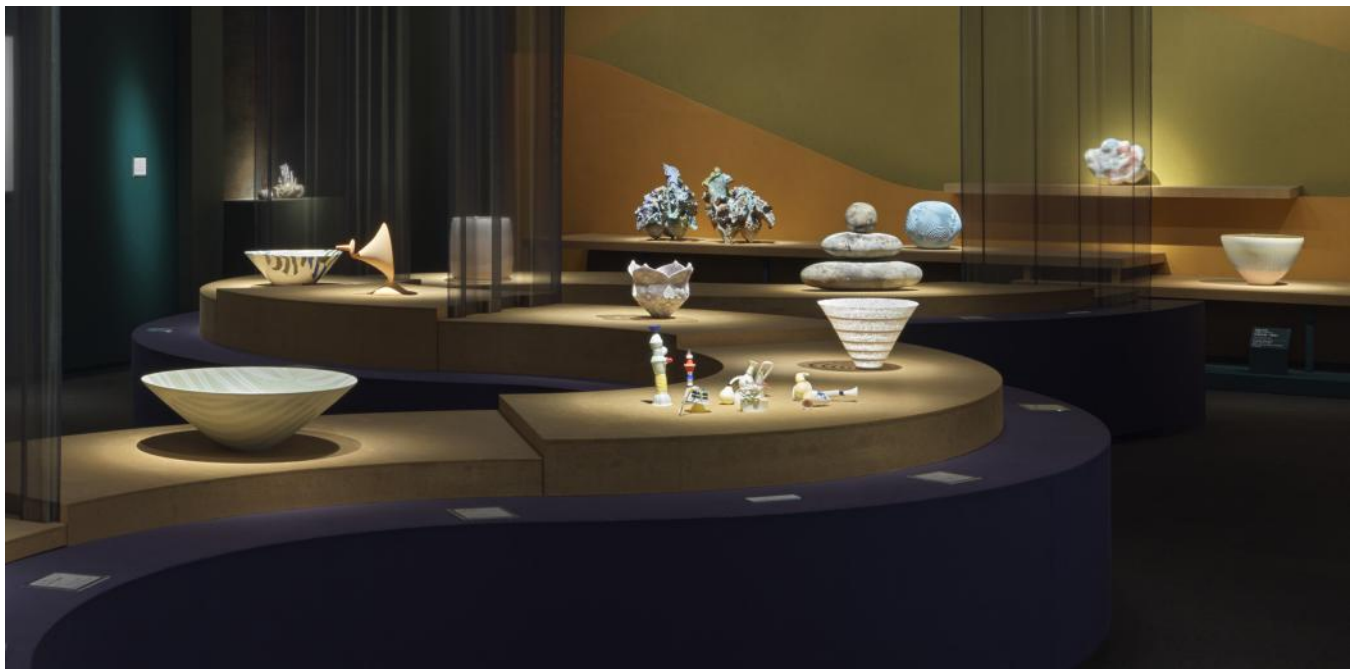
And this isn't recent evolution. The oldest preserved bee nests—from Patagonia's Castillo Formation—date back 100-105 million years (Genise et al., 2021). These tunnels with their grape-shaped brood alcoves, built by ancestors of modern halictid bees in volcanic ash, prove that bee-clay relationships evolved alongside flowering plants during the Early Cretaceous. Bees have been master clay workers longer than flowering plants have existed in their current forms.

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Kikuchi Biennale XI: The Present of Ceramics at the Kikuchi Kanjitsu Memorial Tomo Museum, Tokyo

December 13, 2025 - March 22, 2026





Kikuchi Biennale XI: The Present of Ceramics is a ceramic competition exhibition held at the Kikuchi Kanjitsu Memorial Tomo Museum in Tokyo from December 13, 2025 to March 22, 2026. Organized by the Kikuchi Foundation and Nikkei Inc., the biennale has been held every two years since 2004 as a juried exhibition dedicated to the promotion of ceramic art. Open to artists without restrictions on age, career stage, or the form and size of submitted works, the biennale offers a platform for examining contemporary expressions and possibilities of ceramics.

The 11th edition received a record 452 submissions. After a two-stage selection process—first through image review and then through examination of physical works—46 artworks were selected, including five prizewinning works. The selected works range from vessel forms to sculptural objects and reflect a broad spectrum of contemporary ceramic practice in terms of both creative approach and technical execution. All selected works are presented together in the exhibition at the Tomo Museum.

This edition also saw a significant rise in international participation. A total of 86 submissions were received from outside Japan, representing 33 countries and regions. From this edition onward, applicants based outside Japan were able to apply directly without a local representative, contributing to increased global participation. Applications increased across multiple age groups, and this edition marked the youngest Grand Prize recipient in the biennale's history.

Prizewinners

The **Grand Prize** was awarded to Nakane Gaku for *Contemplation on Borders*. The work explores forms that exist between sculptural object and vessel, engaging with paired concepts such as natural and artificial, abstraction and representation, and chance and intention. Nakane draws on an awareness of how non-vessel objects can evoke use, despite having no practical function, and focuses on the presence of inner space as a trigger for imagination. Through this approach, the work questions the boundary between “something” and “not something,” emphasizing subtle shifts in perception and meaning. remain a mode of creation in which human beings engage the world in its deepest essence.



Grand Prize: NAKANE Gaku, *Contemplation on Borders*, h36.0×w54.0×d53.0cm

Prizewinners

The **Merit Prize** was awarded to Helmie Brugman for *David XVIII*. The work is part of an ongoing series that reshapes classical ideals into vulnerable, genderless child figures. Using clay as a material that allows repetition and variation, Brugman works from a single mold, treating each figure differently. Traces of the making process remain visible, emphasizing imperfection, change, and transformation. The work raises questions about identity, idealization, and the limits of control over human existence.



Merit Prize: Helmie BRUGMAN, David XVIII, h115.0×w40.0×d30.0cm

Eugene Ofori Agyei: Fihankra (You did not say goodbye when you left home) at the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, New York

February 12 – July 19, 2026





Dual Florescence: YehRim Lee and Chase Travaille at LaiSun Keane, Boston

March 6 – April 19, 2026





The Month's News In The Ceramic Art World

01

We are happy to announce a new partnership with the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum. Through their Supporting Member tier, you can now receive a free one-year subscription to *Ceramics Now*, alongside a range of museum benefits, including access to the North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) network. For around \$10/month, your membership supports exhibitions, education, and the care of an important ceramic collection, while keeping you connected to the global contemporary ceramics scene. It's a meaningful way to support both organizations.



02

Applications are open for the 14th International Ceramics Biennial of El Vendrell, an international competition organized by the City Council of El Vendrell, Spain, to promote contemporary ceramic art. Up to twenty works will be selected for exhibition at Sala Portal del Pardo from November 13, 2026 to January 16, 2027, with one artist receiving the €4,300 Biennial Prize and the opportunity to present a solo exhibition in 2027. Submissions are due August 2, 2026.

03

The New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum (Taiwan) invites ceramic artists from around the world to apply for the 2027 Taiwan Ceramics Residency Program, offering the opportunity to work in Yingge, one of Taiwan's most significant ceramic centers. Residents will spend 60 to 90 days developing their practice within a fully equipped studio environment, while engaging with local craftspeople and ceramic traditions. The program provides material support, accommodation, and travel reimbursement. Applications are due June 30, 2026.

04

Clay in Conversation 14: Collect brings together five contemporary collectors for the latest event in the series curated by Julia Ellen Lancaster, taking place at County Hall Pottery on April 24, 2026, from 6–8 pm. Featuring Connor Coulston, Caroline Fisher, Crispin Kelly, and Daniella Wells, with Preston Fitzgerald chairing the discussion, the event explores collecting in contemporary ceramics—from personal motivations to the relationships between artists, galleries, and institutions. The evening will conclude with a Q&A with the audience.

05

Applications are open for the Resident Artist Program at The Clay Studio (Philadelphia), offering early-career ceramic artists the opportunity to develop their practice within a dynamic community setting. The program provides free studio space for up to three years, a \$250 monthly stipend, exhibition opportunities, and professional support. Open to US and international artists, the residency emphasizes community engagement, teaching, and collaboration. The next cohort begins September 1, 2026, and applications are due April 13, 2026.

06

Artists working with clay and in interdisciplinary practices are invited to apply for the Indian Ceramics Triennale 2027, to be held at the National Gallery of Modern Art from November 5 to December 23, 2027. The third edition explores play as a space for experimentation, disruption, and new ways of thinking about material and making. Open to both emerging and established artists from India and abroad, the Triennale welcomes diverse approaches to clay-based practice. Applications are due May 15, 2026, with no application fee.



07

A-B Projects will host *State of Ceramics: The Power of Decoration – Rethinking Hierarchies*, a two-part online conversation led by ceramic artist Anthony Sonnenberg on April 4 and April 11, 2026. The program explores how decoration—often historically marginalized in ceramics—can be reconsidered as a powerful cultural and political tool within contemporary practice. The first session features a lecture and Q&A, followed by a participatory discussion the following week. The events are free and open to the public, with registration required.

08

Applications are open for the 62nd International Ceramic Sculptural Symposium in Bolesławiec (Poland), taking place July 27 – August 21, 2026. Organized by the Bolesławiec Cultural Centre, the symposium will bring together artists from Poland and abroad to develop projects using local materials and factory facilities. This year's theme, *Sublime*, invites reflections on transformation, materiality, and the unpredictability of working with clay and fire. Applications are open until April 17, 2026. The translation button is in the top right corner.

09

The Wayne Art Center invites submissions for *CraftForms 2026*, the 31st International Juried Exhibition of Contemporary Fine Craft, presented by the Wayne Art Center (US). Open to artists working across disciplines, including ceramics, fiber, glass, metal, and mixed media, the exhibition will take place from December 5, 2026, to January 23, 2027. Juried by Robert K. Liu and Patrick Benesh-Liu, the exhibition will award over \$12,000 in prizes. Submissions are due September 9, 2026, with an entry fee of \$50.

10

Mid-career ceramic artists are invited to apply for the McKnight Residency for Ceramic Artists at Northern Clay Center (US), a three-month residency supporting the development of new work and professional exchange. Up to three artists will be selected for residencies taking place in 2027, each receiving a \$6,000 award, free studio space, and firing support. The program culminates in a group exhibition and catalogue, with a touring component. Applications close May 15, 2026.

What's on View



Chenlu Hou and Chiara No: What the Hands Remember to Hear at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT
January 25 - May 25, 2026



Break the Mould at IKON Gallery, Birmingham
March 25 - September 6, 2026



Jennifer King: Persistence of Vision at The Pit, Los Angeles
March 21 - April 30, 2026



Yakimono: A Culture of Exchange – The Impact of Japanese Ceramics at Messums West, Tisbury
March 14 - May 4, 2026



Bachelot & Caron: Porcelaine et faits divers at Musée d'art à Charleroi, Charleroi
January 31 - May 3, 2026



AIR 2026: Compulsion at AMOCA – American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA
January 17 - May 31, 2026



Jennifer McCandless: You're An Animal at Soapbox Arts, Burlington, VT
March 12 - April 25, 2026



Antonio Marras: Caos Calmo at Carpenters Workshop Gallery, London
March 12 - May 2, 2026



Shapes in Tension at Le Don Du Fel, Le Fel
March 22 - June 10, 2026



MORE CLAY! The Power of Repetition at Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA
March 28, 2026 - February 7, 2027



New Generation – Passion for Ceramics at Keramiekcentrum Tiendschuur, Tegelen
March 29 - December 6, 2026



Sofia Beça: Where the Body Listens to Matter – Records of a Working Body at Espaço Mira, Porto
April 11 - June 6, 2026

