

## Ceramic in Brazil From Ancestral to Contemporary

Ceramics have a strong presence in the Brazilian universe in the trivial, utilitarian, decorative, religious, and artistic contexts. Since ancient times, up to the present day, there are records of the use of ceramic objects as part of daily life, ceremonies and ornamentation - clay pottery is seen as an extension of the relationship between human beings and nature. On the surface, a profusion of paintings, textures and reliefs evoke the various symbols of Brazilian culture. The Afro, indigenous and Portuguese influence are always present completed by contemporary elements and influences all belonging to the cultural and historical universe of Brazilian cosmology.

The *Brazil Ceramic Art Exhibition* at the *Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennale 2023* will have different groups of works from indigenous provenience, popular culture from different artisans and contemporary artists, who use ceramics and earth as the basis of their works. The result will be a bright and alive overview of the ceramic legacy in Brazilian culture. The participation at the Biennale under the title *The Journey of Porcelain* in Jingdezhen will present a bright view of works by artists from different parts of the country as well as from different generations. Most of them are producing new pieces for their participation at the Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennial due to the importance of this intercultural dialogue. The participators of the exhibition are Alejandro Lloret, Andrey Guaiane Zignatto, Ayla Tavares, Augusto Ribeiro, Carlos Melo, Claudio das Miniaturas, Dalton Paula, Francisco Brennand, Gabriela Batista, Grupo Cerâmica Artesanal Serra da Capivara, Iêda Jardim, Irene Gomes, Jaider Esbell, Jefferson Paiva de Souza, João Borges, Juliana Vasconcelos, Kimi Nii, Leonilson Arcanjo de Holanda Silva, Luiz Antonio da Silva, Luzia Simons, Marco Tulio Resende, Marlene Almeida, Matheus Rocha Pitta, Mestra Zezinha, Nei Leite Xakriabe, Norma Grinberg, Paulo Neves, Rafael Chavez, Renato Morcatti, Rodrigo Almeida, Sil (Maria Luciene da Silva Siqueira), Tathiana Blass and Thais Helt.

Ceramic is a very rich cultural manifestation in Brazil that often goes beyond generations, perpetuating itself over the years. Introducing different techniques and peculiarities, this handicraft uses a good part of its raw material from the native earth of each region of the country. The manufacturing processes are mostly rustic and are transformed into objects of desire from the skilled hands of artisans and contemporary artists. Brazil's cultural wealth is as diverse and gigantic as its geographical formation. All this could be better disseminated, understood and consequently, preserved, by being presented in transcultural exhibitions as the Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennial. In this case in 2023 in dialogue with other Latin American Countries and hosted by China – a country with an enormous cultural diversity and potentiality followed by a giant geographical territory– as well

as Brazil itself. That is an unique potentiality for the intercultural dialogue between China and Brazil.

### **Ancestral Ceramics**

Ancestral Brazilian ceramics are a representation of the artistic expressions of indigenous communities that inhabited the region for thousands of years. Different indigenous groups have distinct pottery traditions, techniques, and styles that were deeply integrated into their cultures. In a modern and updated version of the ethno-historical map of Brazil and Adjacent Regions, drawn up at the beginning of the 20th century - with a focus on portraying the quantity and ethnic and linguistic diversity - more than 1,400 indigenous ethnic groups were catalogued in 2022, which form part of a map launched by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN). Indigenous ceramics were often used for utilitarian purposes, such as cooking vessels, storage containers, and water jugs. They were also crafted for ritual and spiritual practices, creating vessels and figurines that held symbolic and religious significance. They were adorned with intricate patterns, textures, and carvings. These decorations were often created by representing natural objects like leaves, shells, or cords into the clay's surface. This tradition continues to inspire also contemporary indigenous ceramic artists as Andrey Guaiane Zignatto, Jaider Esbell and Nei Leite Xakriabe participants of this Exhibition.

Afro-Brazilian ceramics hold also a significant place in the country's ancestral cultural and artistic context, reflecting not only the influence of African traditions and heritage on Brazilian art, but also its fusion referred to as syncretism, where African cultural practices and beliefs merged with those of the indigenous and European populations living in Brazil. These ceramics are a testament to the cultural fusion and resilience of Afro-Brazilian communities and their contributions to the nation's artistic identity as in the works presented by Dalton Paula and Rodrigo Almeida.

### **Ceramics and Handicrafts**

Brazil is a large and diverse country with a range of cultural influences, resulting in various ceramic techniques and styles across different regions represented by local handicrafts. Each region often has its unique methods, patterns, and designs, showcasing the cultural diversity of Brazil. The production is usually done in the rural area, where the artisans have direct access to the materiality and developed their own way of producing the ceramic objects. The creation of ceramics often involves traditional techniques that have been passed down through generations. By engaging in ceramic artistry, artisans help preserve these traditions, preventing them from fading into obscurity. Some organizations – as our partner Artesol - work intensive to present the artefacts in intercultural contexts, so that they acquire the

recognition and appreciation deserved to intensify the visibility of the cultural identity of the families and region of the artisans involved in the production. In this section of the exhibition we present works by Augusto Ribeiro, Claudio das Miniaturas, Grupo Cerâmica Artesanal Serra da Capivara, Irene Gomes, Jefferson Paiva de Souza, João Borges, Leonilson Arcanjo de Holanda Silva, Luiz Antonio da Silva, Mestra Zezinha, and Sil de Capela. These artisans prioritize environmentally friendly practices, using locally sourced clay and natural pigments in the creation of utilitary or ornamental objects. Their production is often a communal activity, where people come together to create pottery and share their knowledge. This fosters a sense of community and social bonding among artisans, helping to strengthen local relationships.

### **Contemporary Ceramic**

Brazilian contemporary ceramics are a dynamic and diverse field that showcases the innovative and artistic expressions of ceramic artists in Brazil, which in many cases do not work exclusively with ceramic. These artists draw on traditional techniques, cultural influences, and personal creativity to create unique pieces that reflect their individual perspectives and do not follow current artistic trends, but create their own universe using this medium to express their narrative. Dealing with so precious natural resources the artists are conscious of sustainability and environmental impact using locally sourced materials, engage in low-impact firing techniques, and exploring ways to reduce waste in general. They experiment with new glazing methods, firing techniques, and forms, leading to the fusion of traditional, innovative and unexpected outcomes exploring the synthesis of diverse cultural influences, metaphors and symbolic of Brazilian culture. The ceramic, or its representation in painting and other different medias, is in this case a result of the artists' curiosity and also their necessity to give form to their visual storytelling contributing to the broader narrative of contemporary art on a global scale. It reflects a vibrant and evolving artistic landscape combining ceramics with other artistic mediums such as painting, sculpture, installation, and digital technology. This potentiality is represented in this exhibition through the participation of Alejandro Lloret, Ayla Tavares, Carlos Melo, Francisco Brennand, Gabriela Batista, Iêda Jardim, Juliana Vasconcelos, Kimi Nii, Luzia Simons, Marco Tulio Resende, Marlene Almeida, Matheus Rocha Pitta, Norma Grinberg, Paulo Neves, Rafael Chavez, Renato Morcatti, Tatiana Blass and Thais Helt.

Tereza de Arruda, curator