



ANTÒNIA PALAU

Ultimate delicacy

Caterina Roma

In the countryside, near a tiny village, tucked away in inland Catalonia, Antònia Palau dives as deep as one can go into subtlety. Her studio is a remote, quiet place where time adjusts to the rhythm of the seasons, a place where one can just sit and listen. And there, Palau works listening to her sensitivity and beyond, expressing concepts that are rarely seen in ceramics. Her latest collections are a consistent development of the ultimate delicacy.



above
Retroversió
(Retroversion)
19 x 9 x 15 cm

left
Flama (Flame)
25 x 5 cm
inspired by Julio
Cortázar

Inspired by literature and poetry, reinterpreted by her own photographic work, she fits ceramics into a multidisciplinary approach, where it's hard to tell where one begins and the other one ends.

A ceramic look at the movements of human life

It's not just the play with translucency, but the meticulous work of textures and apparently spontaneous forms. Using just a white finish of porcelain with a clear glaze as an empty canvas, Palau is able to express an amazing range of feelings, concepts and ideas.

Antònia's porcelain sculptures have the movement of life, curves from nature and the purity of spirit. Abstract forms, tangible concepts that express those very human but almost indefinite ideas from dreams, desires and emotions. The great variety of possibilities coming from plain porcelain is amazing when the intention behind it is sharp. And the wide range of clear glaze shades can give porcelain the look of nacre, of a pebble or of a piece of driftwood weathered over years by the sea.

It's quite a challenge to represent human inner life through abstract ceramic forms, but there's no doubt that Antònia Palau has found the way. Representing it through frozen movements, like a held-up flow, a picture that captures an instant of the incessant movement of life. The combination of intuition and technique endows each piece with a unique and definite message.

Her first series, Vida (Life), is a wide approach to the endless beating and breathing of experience, horizontal basic movements of the spirit, in introspection as in dreaming, in expanding or contraction of oneself, showing the marks of life's path that can eventually lead to cracking and tearing. Porcelain shows where the glaze subtly pools, or a hairline fracture occurs, like a frozen emotion. Eloquent faceless figures that talk the universal languages of gestures.

When reflecting about women in her series Dona (Woman), Antònia Palau constructs a series of slim, ethereal vertical figures that incarnate the feminine in its multiple aspects: serenity, purity, fluidity, motherhood... Unglazed porcelain with contained movement, where twisting and texture express a very personal perspective of womanhood as a column or support, as she herself states.

With the same technique, inspired by Anna M^a Riera Solan's poetry or Julio Cortázar's short stories Todos los fuegos (All the fires), Palau created sculptural representations of the literary imagery, a more intellectual approach that establishes a bridge between these disciplines that could only meet in a fertile artistic mind.

Caterina Roma

Caterina Roma is a ceramist and journalist from Barcelona, and a passionate researcher of ceramic techniques and traditions. www.caterinaroma.com

Antònia Palau was born in Almacelles, Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) in 1951. She started learning and practicing ceramics from a very young age in a traditional environment, and in 1970 she began her studies at the Arts and Crafts College in Barcelona. Soon after she graduated she set up her own studio in Barcelona, and continued her training and education in specific techniques with great masters like Angelina Alós or Fernández Chiti. Despite some promising early successes, a few years later she had to take care of the family company, Palau Cerámica - in the industrial branch of ceramics - where she restored a Hoffman kiln and brought in technical innovations like the glazed brick facade or the vitrified tile. After twenty years directing the company, with all the knowledge and experience she had gained in ceramic glazes and techniques, in 2001 she resumed her artistic passion. From then on, she has worked tirelessly, studying and practicing in her studio, presenting her work at countless exhibitions all around the country. She has also imparted monographic workshops on crystalline glazes in many ceramic centres, and in her studio in Almacelles (Spain).

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