



CATERINA ROMA'S

very personal journey into ceramics

RICARD BRU



Caterina Roma is a self-taught ceramicist, who has grown artistically on her own and has managed to make a name for herself in rather a unique way. Her solid, robust perspective makes her one of the most interesting proponents of contemporary artistic ceramics in Catalonia. Her pieces openly reveal one of her main sources of inspiration, Eastern ceramics, and reflect how different traditions can offer a truly positive insight into achieving an unfettered, authentically personal artistic expression.

In her ceramics, Caterina Roma has found a path for her personal growth and with it, a path to mature as a ceramicist and artist capable of transforming wild clay into exquisite pieces, all by herself and with no artifice. She was born in Lleida and educated in Barcelona in Semitic studies and com-

parative literature. Roma has built her world view on these solid intellectual foundations, which have also convinced her to approach the world of ceramics through her intuition. In 2011 she decided to focus uniquely on ceramics, experimenting with it to find a path to fulfilment and personal growth and making it her priority and her *modus vivendi*. It was then that she set up a small workshop in a house in the Putxet neighbourhood, the area that had welcomed the ceramist Llorens Artigas after the war.

However, it was during a stay in Japan in 2012 that she discovered the appeal of working with high-temperature wood-fired kilns. In Kishiwada, near Osaka, she met Japanese potters such as Katsu Kikuchi, Asakura Keiya and Koyama Hiroshi, and discovered the kilns in Fugengama (Osaka), where stunning ceramics are born after days of firing without any glazes used. The young ceramicist fell in love with the pieces, thrilled by their expressive power, by how the interplay of clay with fire, smoke and incandescent ash was capable of producing surprising textures and colours and how, in a very natural way, crude shapes were transformed into ceramics that were full of life. There she also learnt the importance of foraging for clay to make one's own work, and the ongoing research and the tests that



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Chawan Artigas (a piece inspired by a beautiful bowl by the master Josep Llorens Artigas), ø 14cm, h 9cm, 2022
stoneware / thrown / feldspar glaze / wood fired to 1,300°C
/rivulets and drops of volatilized ash / copper reduction pinks

were carried out when foraging for clays in the mountains: "If you do not gather your own clay, you will not be a true potter capable of creating your own expression", Japanese potters told Roma.

After returning home from Japan, Caterina Roma undertook a new path, one that was more arduous and more austere, but which would eventually be very rewarding. She began to test different types of clay to find her own clays and, with them, develop an identity for herself that could offer her the expression she was looking for. She wanted to produce ceramics that were made up of a sincere dialogue between herself, nature and culture. She



Wild, wild vase, ø16cm h 26cm, 2022
wild clay / thrown / porcelain and manganese oxide / wood fired 1300°C
intense effects of the molten materials naturally present in the wild clay

achieved by wood-fired kilns, which she had also discovered in Gallifa. She happened to be in China, where a congress of ceramics magazine editors was being held, and took the opportunity to contact those responsible for The Log Book, a magazine dedicated to wood-fired ceramics. Its editors, Robert Sanderson and Coll Minogue, were the ones who suggested that they could build a wood-fired kiln in Sanglas, near Rupit, Catalonia, in 2014. This kiln, built in the middle of nowhere, or rather in the middle of natural splendour, is the one that Roma has used ever since to create her wild clay ceramics. The pieces are fired at 1300-1320 degrees, and after Roma's periods of intense practice, testing and research, it is as though they create themselves. Her goal was clear: to allow the pieces to be born from nature, following Flaubert's saying: "What I would like to write is a book about nothing, a book without exterior attachments, which would be held together by the inner force of its style, as the earth without support is held in the air – a book that would have almost no subject or at least in which the subject would be almost invisible."

After two years of rebuilding work, in January 2020, Roma went to live in Ca l'Humà, a beautiful 18th century house in Púbol, located next to the Castell Gala Dalí, where she has opened an exquisite workshop and gallery to exhibit and sell her pieces. This is where you can see how, after years of searching, and in parallel with creating ceramics and services for the hotel and catering world under the TREPAT brand, Roma has managed to find her own personality as a ceramic artist, with works that are eminently Mediterranean but that show the influence of Japan and respect for Japanese art, reflected both in the firing techniques and the results. The Japanese touch appears especially in a large series of ceramics that have broken during the wood-firing and have been subsequently repaired by using kintsugi, a technique that the ceramicist learned in Osaka in 2012 through Kato Tsugihiko sensei, and which were presented in the summer of 2022 in her gallery. The gilt-lacquer repairs characteristic of kintsugi appear as though they were the scars from the past in Burke's pursuit of the passage from beauty to the sublime; scars that turn the death of broken ceramics into a burgeoning life force, something that has an even fuller life. These marks, those left by shells during firing, the streaks and rips that are in the natural glazes, or the spirit of the everyday, seeking to bring the beauty of ceramics into our daily lives: all this makes the work of Caterina Roma an ode to life and to her personal struggle to find her way forward. In this case, she treads the path travelled by pottery itself.

top

K.XI, ø 48cm, h 64cm, 2021
stoneware and porcelain / wheel thrown / unglazed / wood fired to 1300°C / molten ash and flame affects
Kintsugi repair with urushi and gold

bottom

K.XII, ø 52cm, h 19cm, 2021, stoneware and porcelain
wheel thrown and altered / unglazed / wood fired to 1,300°C
molten ash and flame effects / Kintsugi repair with urushi and gold





Courtyard of Caterina Roma - Studio & Gallery in Púbol (Spain)



One of the exhibition rooms at Caterina Roma - Studio & Gallery in Púbol (Spain)

RICARD BRU

PhD in history of art and modern art professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He has published several studies on Twentieth Century Spanish ceramics (Francesc Elías, Francisco Ibáñez, Eudald Serra, Llorens Artigas, Gardy Artigas, Josep Aragay...) and has curated many different exhibitions of Catalan and Japanese art, such as Hamada & Artigas. The Colours of Fire or The Lotus Moon. Otagaki Rengetsu. He is currently working on a critical edition of Llorens Artigas' unpublished memoirs, which will come out at the end of this year.

Caterina Roma

With a bachelor's degree in literature, postgraduate in translation and a master's degree in publishing, Caterina Roma worked for some years in one of the biggest publishing companies worldwide in the Spanish language before dedicating herself solely to ceramics. Being a self-taught ceramist from a very young age gave Caterina Roma a rare freedom to create by intuition and observation, exploring the possibilities and limits of the materials and techniques without prejudice, judging by experience and following instinct. Digging her own clay, processing rocks and plants for glazing and building her own wood kiln in the forest for firing the pots is her way to touch the essential sensitivity of wild beauty.

Besides her artistic research, in 2015 Caterina created her own dinnerware brand TREPAT BARCELONA, offering the finest handmade dinnerware. Focused on wild clay and porcelain, Trepata Barcelona is used by starred chefs all around the globe. In 2018 she began the project of rebuilding a XVIII century house next to the Gala-Dalí museum (Púbol, Spain) to turn it into a 600 m² ceramic studio and gallery. Her work has been shown in exhibitions and galleries around the world.

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