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Image:  
**Claudia Terstappen**, *Section II*, 2019, glazed  
ceramic, h.43cm, w.36cm, d.36cm; photo: artist



# FORM AND MEMORY

by Claudia Terstappen

My journey into the world of ceramics started six years ago when I received a five-month fellowship in the Academy of Visual Arts at the Hong Kong Baptist University. The University provided me with an apartment and a beautiful studio space in Kowloon, which happened to be located next to the Academy's ceramics workshop. Having previously studied sculpture in relation to architecture and photography, I was used to working with a variety of materials and techniques. Ceramics, however, was new to me. Being in Hong Kong provided me with the perfect platform to try something different and challenge myself with the opportunity to attend a ceramics course and use their workshops. It set my path in an unexpected direction.

I discovered that clay allowed me to translate my ideas directly into form, and as such, all my works are handbuilt. I love rich surfaces and bright colours. The vivid oranges and yellows in my work are achieved using earthenware glazes that I apply like thick monochrome paint to emphasise the characteristics of the form itself. Most of my glazes come from Spain. If I can't realise an idea with ceramics due to the limitation of my kiln size or the reading of the material, I proceed to a different material or medium. There are strong conceptual connections between all my works, whether sculptural or lens-based with reference to photography. I think that using a variety of materials and techniques widens the spectrum of opportunities to engage with my work.

I spent much of last year in preparation for a large solo exhibition, *Form and Memory*, at Dominik Mersch Gallery in Sydney (November 2019). This project started in my Melbourne studio with a gallery floor plan and photographs of the gallery, which enabled me to produce specific works for the exhibition space. Having worked on major exhibitions overseas, an architectural model and photographs of the exhibition space are essential tools for me to establish a close relationship with the space and its dimensions. They also establish the relationship between the sizes of the individual artworks within the exhibition space. Further, they help me to imagine how the viewer navigates through the space and experiences the art works.

For the exhibition, I created a body of ceramic sculptures that I juxtaposed with photographs and a woodcut to create a dialogue between two- and three-dimensional works that referenced the intersection between nature and culture – 54 works altogether. My idea was to create an atmosphere of fragmentation, with the photographic works providing a link between the sculptures and photographs. By doing so, I wanted to use nature as a mirror through which viewers could define the relationship between humans and our surrounding world.

## Claudia Terstappen

1 *Red spiral*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.36cm, w.25cm d.12cm; photo: artist

2 *Blue loop*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.40cm, w.28cm d.15cm; photo: artist

3 *New love*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.45cm, w.38cm d.30cm; photo: artist

4 *Zickzack 2*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.47cm, w.11cm d.7cm; photo: artist



1



2



3



4

While my visual language is intensely shaped by the flora and fauna of Australia's outback, I have also always loved living in large cities. I consider both environments important influences. Prior to Melbourne, I lived in Barcelona. The rich architectural features of Spain and Portugal – mouldings, friezes, architraves, rosettes, mosaics and the elaborate Azulejos that interlock geometric or floral motifs – are a great source of inspiration for my work.

I now divide my time between Melbourne and Barcelona – so I need to plan everything well in advance. If I am invited for an exhibition overseas I will usually create the work in Spain or the country where the exhibition takes place (which means renting a studio space for that period). But I have also had large exhibitions, for example in Japan and Germany, where the works were picked up and shipped to the museum. I am now preparing for a solo exhibition at Susan Boutwell Gallery in Munich, Germany, which opens on 16 June 2020. I have developed a suite of drawings for this new body of work that I will begin as soon as I hit the ground in Barcelona.

**Claudia Terstappen has lived and worked in Düsseldorf, London, New York, Hong Kong and Barcelona. She moved to Australia in late 2004. She has exhibited internationally since the 1980s. Her work is represented in major collections in the US, Australia, Germany, Spain and Japan.**

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## TECHNICAL NOTES

I mainly use Northcote White Raku Handbuilding Clay which is ideally suited to handbuilding sculptural forms. With its bisque firing temperature at 1000°C and glaze temperature 1000–1300°C, it gives me the flexibility I want for the glazes I use (and in case I decide to go for a stoneware finish). I freely construct my work, starting by rolling 5–6mm thick slabs using a rolling pin. I then cut the sheet size I need and construct the forms. I use underglazes and earthenware glazes because I like very bright colours. I bought a medium-sized, second-hand Furnace Technology kiln that I am very happy with. I usually fire pieces twice, but occasionally three times if I want to add another colour or effect. My top firing temperature is 1060°C, as this is efficient for the glazes I use.



**Claudia Terstappen, *Form and Memory*** exhibition, Dominic Mersch Gallery, November/December 2019; foreground, *Swaddle*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.22cm, w.35cm, d.60cm; photo: artist

Left:  
**Claudia Terstappen, *Form and Memory*** exhibition, Dominic Mersch Gallery, November/December 2019; foreground left: *Small yellow-bronze tower*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.29.5cm, w.18cm, d.12cm; foreground middle: *Small red tower*, 2019, glazed ceramic, h.29cm, diam.14cm; foreground right: *green loop*, 2019, diam.43.5cm, h.23cm; photo: artist