

ARTSY

These 20 Artists Are Shaping the Future of Ceramics

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Artists and artisans working with ceramics have steadily contributed to the art world for centuries. From prehistoric pottery to ancient Greek amphoras, from the rise of porcelain in Asia and Europe to the Arts and Crafts movement in England and the U.S., ceramic traditions have long fascinated artists and infiltrated their practices. In the contemporary art world, this was never more clear than in 2014, when ceramics arguably achieved peak popularity.

At the Whitney Biennial that year, the ceramics of Sterling Ruby and Shio Kusaka were featured prominently; the de Purys curated a show of leading ceramic artists at Venus Over Manhattan; and at major fairs like Frieze and Art Basel, galleries punctuated their presentations with pots by Dan McCarthy and Takuro Kuwata, and the figurative sculptures of Rachel Kneebone and Klara Kristalova.

It was within this context that older living artists who have long championed the medium, like Betty Woodman, Ken Price, Arlene Schechet, and Ron Nagle, saw a resurgence; and younger artists like Jesse Wine, Rose Eken, Elizabeth Jaeger, and Jennie Jieun Lee found a market. And while the trend has tapered off somewhat, enthusiasm for ceramics remains strong and artists working in the medium continue to maintain a steady foothold in art-world venues.

“Ceramics is a medium that, with every passing decade, becomes easier for the untrained to manipulate—more rampant, versatile, and demystified, and perhaps more worthy of a clarified position within the wider history of sculpture,” says the British ceramist Aaron Angell, who set up a pottery studio in London in 2014 to teach fellow artists. “I feel that fired clay deserves better than to be indelibly colored by allusions to (not) being useful, the foggy world of craft, or the masturbatory hermetics of the master potter,” he adds.

And he’s by no means alone. Countless artists today are shifting the perception of ceramics, ensuring that whether taking the shape of a functional vessel or an explosive sculpture, the art form receives its due respect and recognition. Below, we share the work of 20 living ceramic artists, as they each share why they’re passionate about clay.

Julia Haft-Candell

B. 1982, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA • LIVES AND WORKS IN LOS ANGELES



Julia Haft-Candell, *Friends*. Courtesy of Parrasch Heijnen Gallery and the artist.

Haft-Candell approaches clay with humor and an eye for problem-solving, creating sculptural work that tests the malleability and strength of the medium, through giant knots or pretzel forms, or asymmetrical blobs finished with layers of translucent glazes. She'll often fire a glazed work multiple times to achieve a precise depth of color. "With ceramics I can draw and paint in three dimensions, and create glazes with colors and surfaces unlike any other medium," says Haft-Candell. She is currently included in a two-person show at Interface Gallery in Oakland, and this fall she'll have a solo show with Parrasch Heijnen Gallery in Los Angeles.