

A Tireless Spirit

Four years ago, the Argentinean visual, artist Sofia Donovan who is based in Chile, started doing a pottery workshop with Lise Moller. Three years ago she started to work in the Huara Huara workshop which is run by Ruth Krauskopf and she continues to do that to this day. Sofia admits that this interest in pottery subconsciously or otherwise is probably because there was a workshop at her grandmother's home in the countryside. And her need to learn more about this area is in response to her restless spirit and thirst for knowledge.

Experimentation defines Sofia's career. Thus, the addition of this third dimension to her work was something which was slowly seducing her and she eventually realised it was what she wanted to do. Somehow the volume was needed to overcome the two-dimensionality of her earlier work, which was mainly composed of abstract resin and wooden, flat surfaced compositions. The clay, ended up becoming a tool with which she felt comfortable immediately.

Sofia describes pottery as being a language which never causes any kind of technical problem. Unlike the previous materials that she used, which after a while didn't respond to her needs, clay is completely versatile and is now the material which is at the forefront of all her work. This is very important because what she chooses to make her work with, is nearly as important as what she decides to make. There is an equilibrium between the two which is fluid and coherent. They complement each other.

The use of this particular raw material and its essential primitive and earthy essence is significant. The clay's original condition is important to Sofia. However, Donovan admits that her closeness to this medium has come about through her search for the right vehicle to work with. But, she says her work is far removed from the stereotypical image many people have of pottery as a romantic tool to make something old fashioned. But, it is impossible not to make the link between her work, clay and the geography and landscape in Chile. Donovan admits that she is influenced by the landscape in Chile, for the sheer scale of it and the rawness and vulnerability of it.

Enamels are integral to her work. They form part of the finish, the colour, the brightness and the texture. This alchemy so characteristic of minerals has made her obsessed with the infinite possibilities that are out there. The firing of the clay is also an important part of her work: a difficult technique that involves a fair degree of surprise for restless minds like hers. This adds an exquisite dynamic random element that triggers other things. The firing of the ceramics also builds of the conceptual side of their parts.

What really defines her works is the addition of different materials to enhance their rhetoric. This produces a kind of hybrid form that surprises and unsettles the viewer. Random objects or parts of them are moulded together with the clay as if they were prothetic limbs. The result is a kind of provocative imbunches (a mythical deformed figure from Chiloe) which lies undaunted, though worthy emanating an aura with its mere presence. Donovan talks about her pieces as if they were her daughters. They

are all totally feminine, obsessive metaphors about sexuality and the origin of life.

Her works have an undeniable ferocity and reveal the rich but troubled inner world of the artist. At one point she recognizes that they are an excuse to talk about herself and to highlight the role of women - this stereotype that they should always be contained and perfect . Here Donovan wants to be more provocative, looking in other words to, "épater le bourgeois " .

Thus, these intriguing , incredibly expressive and original sculptures , that come out of the mould, produce mixed feelings, this is something which is becoming a feature of the work of Sofia. She wants to explore this dynamic world of forms and antiforms , the accuracy and ambiguity , because after all, nothing is real.

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