

Press release
February 2015

Artigas, Chapallaz, de Montmollin Bards of Enamels

MUSÉE ARIANA, GENEVA, 4 FEBRUARY TO 31 MAY 2015

Inauguration

Tuesday, February 3, 2015

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PRESS RELEASE

Geneva, February 2015 **Combining in a single exhibition works by the Catalan Josep Llorens Artigas (1892-1980), the Swiss ceramists Édouard Chapallaz (b.1921) and Brother Daniel de Montmollin (b.1921) – active within the Taizé religious community in Burgundy – is not purely random. These three artists, who have each in their own way left their mark on contemporary European ceramics, have continuously enhanced their understanding of enamels throughout their careers, knowledge that all three have been keen to pass on through their teaching, publications and more generally by their openness and their availability towards colleagues.**

Creating unique wheel-turned pieces, mostly with simple, pure lines, all three have endeavoured to sublimate these forms by clothing them, like a skin intimately fused to the clay, with enamels of infinite variety and depth. Bright or muted, matt or gloss, single or superimposed, fired in reduction or oxidation atmospheres, the enamels have an eloquence that is never, with these highly experienced masters, the result of chance. Fire certainly plays a major role and can sometimes have surprises in store, but it is mainly through knowledge, practice and experience – “a kiln without tests is a wasted kiln” said Artigas – the fruit of many years of hard work, that they have acquired over time a remarkable command of their art. All three mention the same source of inspiration: Chinese stoneware and porcelain. “Oxblood” “hare’s fur”, “oil spot” and celadon, the sensuality of Far Eastern enamels and glazes and their moving poetic names are a source of fascination and stimulation; they provide the model.

Despite these apparent parallels, the three ceramists have each followed their own path. Artigas placed his vast savoir-faire at the service of artists like Joan Miró and Raoul Dufy, while continuing his production of slender vases in delicate tones; Chapallaz, with his sound technical experience gained in industry, developed a personal approach notably through his interest in ceramic walls incorporated into architecture; de Montmollin, whose vocation as a potter is enriched by a spiritual dimension, has built up a near encyclopaedic knowledge of ash glazes, tirelessly scouring the surrounding countryside for raw materials.

Eminently respectful of their colleagues’ work without being very close, the three artists have met on several occasions. De Montmollin gladly went to Gallifa when in Spain. He remembers the delicious meals prepared on these occasions by Artigas’ Genevan wife. Artigas, for his part, enjoyed drinking tea at the Chapallaz’s home on visits to Switzerland. Through the intermediary of Philippe Lambergcy, Chapallaz and de Montmollin met on several occasions.

Although enamelled ceramics did go temporarily out of fashion at the turn of the 21st century, being supplanted by bare clay and raw textures, it would appear that this type of coating is enjoying renewed interest today among young ceramists. The timeless enamelled vase, in all its simplicity and sophistication, has been more than sufficient for our three ceramists as a field of exploration to sustain a long career. The Musée Ariana's collection, thanks in particular to gifts by the collectors Charles and Isabelle Roth and Csaba Gaspar, contains a significant ensemble of work by Édouard Chapallaz (169 pieces) and owing to a very generous recent donation by Brother Daniel de Montmollin, the body of work by this artist now numbers 39 items. As regards Josep Llorens Artigas, we have drawn on loans from Genevan private collections, given that the museum's holdings only include three ceramics from his studio.

Josep Llorens Artigas

Josep Llorens Artigas was born in Barcelona in 1892 and died in Gallifa (Catalonia, Spain) in 1980. He lived and worked in his native city and Paris before moving in the 1950s to the small village of Gallifa.

From the age of 15, Artigas followed evening classes in drawing before attending the School of Creative Arts and Industries and Fine Arts in Barcelona. There, he discovered ceramics and as he did not consider himself a very talented painter, he soon specialised in the former. The rigour and perseverance that he demonstrated in his work throughout his career were counterbalanced by a bohemian spirit tinged with the romantic. In his youth, he had links with intellectual, political and artistic movements in Barcelona, where he also worked as an art critic from 1917 onwards. He wrote both about contemporary artists (he penned a first vindication of Miró in 1918) and ancient ceramics (notably Egyptian blue ceramic ware).

In 1924, he moved to Paris, fascinated, like many other artists, by the spirit of intellectual and artistic emulation reigning in the City of Lights. There he mixed with Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), with whom he had a fairly difficult relationship, Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), helping him to create over 200 pieces, in particular the famous "jardinières de salon", and Albert Marquet (1875-1947), with whom he produced a series of panels. Interested in cinema, he played the role of the governor in "L'Âge d'Or" by Luis Buñuel (1900-1983). In parallel with these projects, he took part in solo and group exhibitions in Paris, Barcelona and New York. The first ceramic piece to join MOMA's collections in 1932 was none other than a vase by Artigas!

He became married in Geneva in 1941 to a Swiss woman, Violette Gardy. He moved back to Barcelona in the same year and embarked on a long, intense and fruitful collaboration with Joan Miró (1893-1983), which would intensify from 1950 onwards, to such an extent that Artigas's fame was sometimes subordinate to that of Miró. Although the ceramist never added decoration to his work, favouring the subtle colours of enamels, Miró painted and engraved forms that had been prepared and fired by Artigas. The culmination of the partnership between the two men was without doubt the mural panels made for UNESCO's Paris headquarters, an ambitious project as well as a real technical challenge and a colossal amount of work for the ceramist. In 1949, he also began a joint venture with Georges Braque (1882-1963), but which would be completed by the ceramist's son, Joan Gardy Artigas (b.1938). Finally, between 1950 and 1955, he produced utilitarian forms designed and decorated by the Catalan sculptor Eudald Serra i Güell (1911-2002).

In 1947, Artigas published a collection of enamel formulas. In his view, a recipe is not definitive; it is a living element that can be adapted according to the circumstances. "Pepito", as he was known by those close to him, created more than 3000 enamel formulas throughout his career. It was moreover in this particular area, rather than in the shapes of his vases, which had to be simple and pure, "given" by the wheel, that Artigas would attain the zenith of his creativity. As turning is not his key point, he willingly accepted the assistance of workers who created forms under his attentive and demanding supervision. "I believe my pieces are immediately recognisable much more by their character than by their actual form". Although at first sight austere and repetitive, Artigas' vases are, on the contrary, (if we take the time to appreciate them) full of subtlety and restraint, of a moving poetry and softness. His spiritual affinities with the Far East were closely intertwined with a fascination for Chinese ceramics. He even broke a Chinese vase one day in order to unlock its secrets.

In 1951, he purchased the property of El Racó in Gallifa, near Barcelona, and moved there the following year, becoming a magnet for visitors in this small village. He built two kilns there, the first inspired by Nikosthenes, an Athenian potter (c.530-500 BC) and the second based on Chinese Song kilns. After a

visit to Japan in 1967 for the wedding of his son Joan, where he met the ceramist Shoji Hamada (1894-1978), he built another kiln, a Mashiko one of Korean design. All these kilns inspired by ancient traditions were wood burning, a firing process – at the heart of which smoke plays a vital role – which would remain dear to him throughout his life. He preferred to be alone when the kiln was opened, perhaps to experience more intimately that delicate and magic moment when the completed work is first revealed.

After the demise of his spouse in 1973, Josep Llorens Artigas was gradually forced to abandon his craft due to poor health. He passed away on 12 December 1980. His son continues his work, notably through his collaborations with artists. In 1989, he set up a foundation in Gallifa in memory of his father and to encourage artistic vocations.

Marks



An enamel recipe: Verde azul

aluminium oxide	150
lead oxide	40
chromium oxide	27
cobalt oxide	29

Firing cone 9 (1280°C)

Bibliography (selective)

Artigas, el hombre del fuego, cat., Fundació Caixa Catalunya, Barcelona, 2012

Joan Punyet Miró, Joan Gardy Artigas, Joan Miró, Josep Llorens Artigas. Ceramics. Catalogue raisonné 1941-1981, Paris, 2007

Francesc Miralles, Llorens Artigas, Catalogue de l'œuvre personnel et créations avec Dufy, Marquet, Miró, Paris, 1993

Josep Llorens Artigas, Formularios y prácticas de cerámica, Barcelona, 1947

Édouard Chapallaz

Born in 1921 at Yverdon-les-Bains (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland), Édouard Chapallaz lives and works in Duillier (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland).

After having completed his training as a thrower at the École suisse de céramique in Chavannes-Renens (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland) (1926-1939), during the course of which he met Philippe Lambercy (1919-2006) (who was in the decorator-moulder section), Édouard Chapallaz worked in industry as a thrower, then as operations manager for Tonwerk in Thayngen (Canton of Schaffhausen) and then for Landert & Co in Embrach (Canton of Zurich), and finally as technical director for the tile company Ceramic SA in Gland (Canton of Vaud). He owes his sound technical training to his activities in industry, both in terms of throwing and mastery of the firing process.

At the end of the Second World War, Chapallaz visited an exhibition of Chinese porcelain at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris, where he saw for the first time the famous red “oxblood” pieces. This significant encounter was a real aesthetic shock for him; throughout his career he remained fascinated by the richness of Chinese enamels whose poetic names he finds greatly moving: “blue sky after rain”, “moonlight” “partridge feathers”, or “hare’s fur”.

In parallel with his work in industry, he continued his research in his own studio in the evenings into stoneware and enamels. The first attempts were fired at low temperature, but he soon set his sights on stoneware (a material that he has always preferred to porcelain, considering the latter too superficial and lifeless), which has to be fired at a high temperature in order to reveal the depth of the enamels. He constructed his own electric kilns with which he experimented and soon mastered what at first seems impossible for any ceramist: reduction firing in an electric kiln. To achieve this, he introduced hydrocarbons (naphthalene or petrol) into the kiln when it had reached a certain temperature, guesstimating at first and then using a dropper bottle. After lengthy and patient trials, he presented his individual work for the first time at l'Entracte in Lausanne in 1957, but to little success. Some years later, Chapallaz's vases came to arouse considerable interest in Switzerland and abroad (especially in Germany). It was not uncommon then to see people queuing at an exhibition opening (and sometimes in advance) to purchase his ceramics, and that all the items exhibited were sold during the inauguration. The result of constant research and experimentation, the lustrous copper reds (ranging from blue to red according to the firing atmosphere), deep iron blacks, celadons or the matt, gritty whites from the Cyclades series cover the vessels like a skin or a majestic coating. The recipients, initially cylindrical, have become increasingly rounded and ample, deliberately cut and flattened like pebbles. Following his noteworthy visit to Karlsruhe in 1976 to see an exhibition on the art of the Cyclades, the vases adopted discreetly anthropomorphic forms.

After Embach he came to Geneva (where he worked briefly and not entirely problem-free with the Menelika studio) and moved in 1958 to Duillier (Canton of Vaud) where he still lives today. At the request of Philippe Lambercy, he taught ceramic technology at the École des arts décoratifs in Geneva. In 1968, he withdrew from both teaching and industry to devote himself to his personal work, which developed along three main lines: utilitarian ware, one-off ornamental pieces and architectural ceramics. The latter area demanded a great deal of effort on his part but has left him with a feeling of bitterness today. The ceramic walls, although sometimes provoking scandal when initially installed, soon blended into the background, losing all visibility and arousing only indifference. He worked first with the painter Jean Baier (1932-1999) for the wall of the Ports-Francs (Free Ports) in Geneva and that of the post office at Lausanne railway station, before producing major architectural panels by himself in

Switzerland and elsewhere. The majestic wall of the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) required a year of hard solitary work and no less than six tonnes of clay!

It is therefore through his one-off pieces, the enamelled vases of infinite, subtle and unexpected hues, that Édouard Chapallaz has established his reputation as a major ceramist on the international scene.

Marks



An enamel recipe: Cyclades white

kaolin	106
feldspar	565
chalk	96
barium carbonate	233
Total	1000
zinc oxide	87
titanium dioxide (rutile)	43

Reduction firing in an electric kiln at 1260°C

Bibliography (selective)

Rosmarie Lippuner et al., Édouard Chapallaz. Une passion : la céramique, cat., Musée des arts décoratifs, Lausanne, 1989

Ekkart Klinge, Édouard Chapallaz, cat., Hetjens-Museum, Düsseldorf, 1982

Brother Daniel de Montmollin

Born in 1921 in Saint-Aubin in the Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland), Brother Daniel de Montmollin lives and works in the Taizé religious community in Burgundy (France).

Just after having taken his maturité exams in Geneva (with, he adds, disastrous marks in Chemistry and Physics!), Daniel de Montmollin was called up for 800 days of military service at Savatan (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland), which he carried out in parallel with his studies in theology. After meeting Brother Roger (1915-2005), he helped to set up the Taizé community, which he joined in 1942.

The community subsequently adopted 25 children orphaned by the war who were considered “problem cases”. Among the leisure activities organised for these residents was the making of crib figures. It was in Cluny in 1949, where Brother Daniel had gone to obtain clay for these figures, that he met the ceramist Alexandre Kostanda (1921-2007), a Polish exile. In his rather antiquated studio, Brother Daniel experienced a true emotive shock. Encouraged by Brother Roger, Daniel learnt the rudiments of working clay with Kostanda (a good thrower, but not the best of teachers according to his student!), with the dual intent of setting up a personal studio and a small production centre at Taizé. One of the basic principles of the community is not to spend more than one earns. In this respect, the production and sale of pottery is perfectly in keeping with the community’s aims. Brother Daniel then went to Biot (Alpes-Maritimes) for three months to complete his training with a disabled thrower, who had lost some fingers and was not called up for the Algerian War. He was then able to start producing pottery, which was fired at low temperature up until 1956, when he acquired the first gas kiln constructed in France at Golfe Juan (Côte d’Azur), which made it possible to fire stoneware at high temperatures. In contrast with the electric kiln, the gas kiln allows for adjustment of the firing atmospheres (oxidising or reducing). Daniel de Montmollin gradually learnt his craft thanks to the support of the many friends around him who enabled him to progress. At the forefront of these was the Swiss ceramist Philippe Lambercy (1919-2006), with whom he formed a much-prized friendship. It was with the latter and his wife Élisabeth that Brother Daniel learnt the basics of molecular calculation and developed his technological and chemistry skills. Philippe Lambercy moreover acquired the same kiln as him. The Belgian ceramist and sculptor Antoine de Vinck (1924-1992), who had worked at St Ives in Cornwall with Bernard Leach (1887-1979) also became a friend with whom de Montmollin developed the ash glazes.

On the scientific level, his encounter with Anne-Marie Morand, who was then carrying out her PhD research into silicates, was decisive. She carried out hundreds of analyses for him, making the delicate work of classifying ash glazes possible. Some Spanish friends with an elemental characterization laboratory, for their part, analysed rocks. Other invaluable help, within the community in this case, came from Brother Hervé, whose training as a mathematician enabled de Montmollin to complete the book on stoneware glazes.

Daniel de Montmollin does not seek to consider himself an artist, but rather as a potter, who patiently throws his vases, animating their surfaces with endlessly renewed enamels and surrendering them to the flames with insatiable curiosity and pleasure. He is mainly interested in the richness and diversity of local materials, mineral and vegetal, that he finds in the surrounding countryside: the diverse rocks that he collects while climbing the hills, and above all the vegetable ashes, which fire his inspiration and open up an infinite research area. He shares and transmits his vast knowledge with passion and generosity with potters in the region, as well as with anyone who crosses the threshold of his studio. Daniel de Montmollin makes his own the saying of the botanist Pierre Poivre (1719-1786): “a setback is a success that is playing hard to get”. His research and precise calculations never stop, enabling him to extend the range of possibilities a little more each day. In passing, he deplors the intellectual laziness

of young ceramists, who favour the path of experimentation over that of apprenticeship and who have easy access to industrial products.

To allow a wide public to experience the fundamental link that connects us to clay, he has developed the “slip game”. This very free game without rules allows people to explore, on a board covered with porcelain slip, with their eyes open or blindfolded, the question of pressure, the way of applying one’s hand and the speed of one’s gestures, while at the same time appreciating the softness and sensuality of liquid clay.

For Daniel de Montmollin, ceramics today has more than ever an important mission to accomplish, that of allowing people from the city to rediscover a true connection with nature. Through its direct and immediate link with the four elements, ceramics forms a triple alliance: with nature on one hand, but also with oneself and with others. Going against the grain of our busy mercantile society, he considers pottery as a path (the do of Far Eastern philosophy), a beautiful way of being and living in the world, in osmosis with nature and in relation to others.

Mark



An enamel recipe: “oil spot” enamel

Molecular formula:

calcium oxide (CaO)	0. 20
aluminium oxide (Al ₂ O ₃)	0.58
silica (SiO ₂)	4.68
magnesium oxide (MgO)	0. 25
ferric oxide (Fe ₂ O ₃)	0.20
potassium/sodium oxide (KNaO)	0. 55

Mineralogical composition:

chalk - talc - feldspar - silica – iron oxide

Oxidation fired up to 1210°C, then neutral atmosphere up to 1300°C. At 1210°C, the iron oxide loses oxygen, makes the enamel “boil” and be deposited on the surface in small spots.

Bibliography (selective)

Daniel de Montmollin, Les Mains sur terre. Présence de la poterie, Auxerre, 2013
Daniel de Montmollin, Le Jeu de la barbotine : un défi de la créativité, Vendin-le-Vieil, 2010
Daniel de Montmollin, Pierres habitées, Vendin-le-Vieil, 2010
Daniel de Montmollin, Pratique des émaux de grès, Vendin-le-Vieil, 1987
Daniel de Montmollin, L’Art de cendres. Émaux de grès et cendres végétales, Taizé, 1976



Vases (details, from top to bottom), Josep Llorens Artigas, Daniel de Montmollin, Édouard Chapallaz
Collection Musée Ariana
Photos Nicolas Lieber, Graphic design: Fresh

Artigas, Chapallaz, de Montmollin Chantres des émaux

MUSÉE ARIANA, GENÈVE, DU 4 FÉVRIER AU 31 MAI 2015

RENDEZ-VOUS AU MUSÉE

Visites commentées

Les dimanches 8 février, 8 mars, 19 avril et 31 mai à 11 heures

Projection en continu

Le chaos fertile de Daniel de Montmollin, les dimanches 8 février, 8 mars, 19 avril et 24 mai

Artigas de Isao Llorens, les dimanches 8 mars et 24 mai

Entrée libre

Table ronde

Le mercredi 4 février dès 10 heures

10 h 15 **Aux sources de l'émail** en présence de Daniel de Montmollin

11 h 15 **La fondation artigas à Gallifa** par Mariette Llorens Gardfy et Joan Gardy Artigas

Modératrice : Anne-Claire Schumacher

Entrée libre, sur réservation

Dans le cadre de la Nuit des musées et de la Journée internationale des musées

le 16 mai 2015 de 18 à 23 heures et le 17 mai de 14 à 17 heures

Divine barbotine d'après le « jeu de la barbotine » élaboré par Daniel de Montmollin

Renseignements et inscriptions

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Visite de presse sur demande

Vernissage le mardi 3 février 2015 à 19 h

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MUSÉE ARIANA, GENÈVE, DU 4 FÉVRIER AU 31 MAI 2015

VISUELS POUR LA PRESSE

01 De gauche à droite :

Edouard Chapallaz

Vase, 1993

Grès, émail marbré

H. 22 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 2009-33

Josep Llorens Artigas

Vase, vers 1960

Grès, émail mat

H. 41 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 4250

Daniel de Montmollin

Vase, vers 1990

Grès, émaux superposés

H. 25,5 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 1996-149



Photos Musée Ariana, Ville de Genève

02 Edouard Chapallaz

Vase, 1969

Grès, émail brun-rouge « flammé »

H. 33 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 5412

Photo Jacques Pugin



**03 Vases (détails, de haut en bas) Josep Llorens Artigas,
Daniel de Montmollin, Edouard Chapallaz,**
Collection Musée Ariana, Ville de Genève

Photos Nicolas Lieber, Graphisme : Fresh



04 Josep Llorens Artigas

Vase, vers 1960
Grès, émail mat
H. 41 cm
Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 4250

Photo Nicolas Lieber



05 Edouard Chapallaz

Vase, 1960
Grès, émail « sang de bœuf » moucheté
H. 40 cm
Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 6780

Photo Nicolas Lieber



06 Edouard Chapallaz

Vase, 1993

Grès, émail marbré

H. 22 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 2009-33

Photo Nicolas Lieber



07 Edouard Chapallaz

Vase, 1976

Grès, émail blanc mat

H. 62.5 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 11662

Photo Jacques Pugin



08 Daniel de Montmollin

Vase, 2014

Grès, émaux superposés bleu et blanc moucheté, réserves à la cire

H. 22 cm

Collection Musée Ariana – Inv. AR 2014-134

Photo Nicolas Lieber



09 Frère Daniel de Montmollin (1921)

Photo Frère Andreas, Taizé



10 Edouard Chapallaz (1921)

Photo Louis Challande



11 Josep Llorens Artigas (1892-1980)

Photo Otho Lloyd



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