



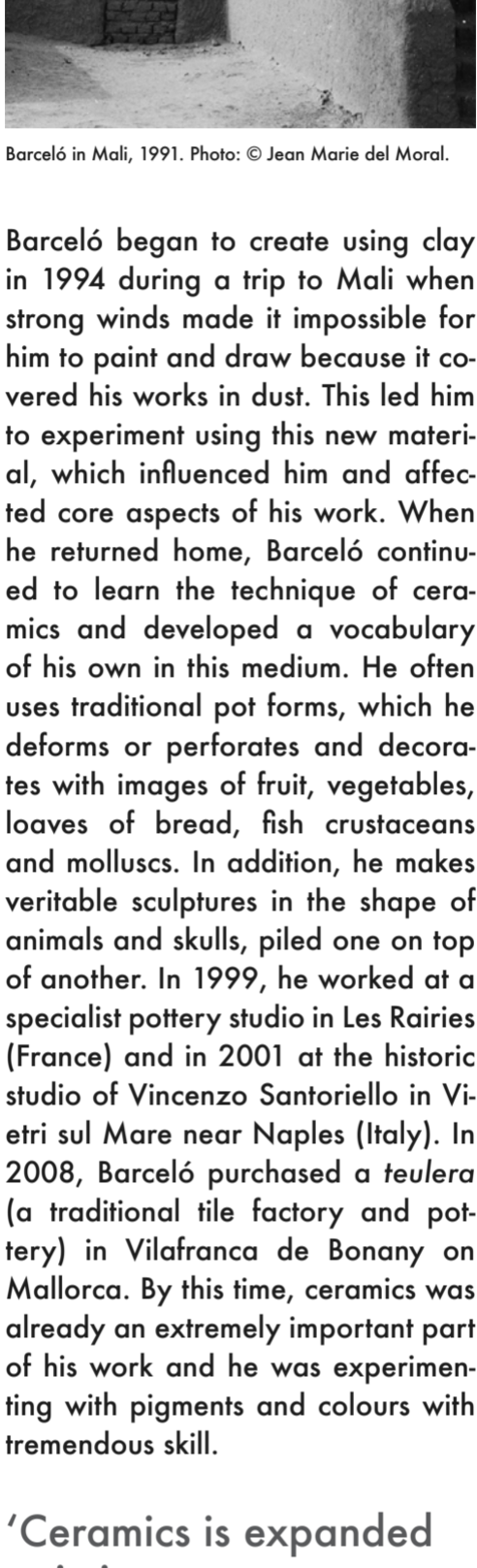
BARCELÓ

WE ARE ALL GREEKS

8 March
to 30 June 2024

The painter, sculptor, sketcher and ceramist Miquel Barceló (Felanitx, Mallorca, 1957) is one of the most notable figures on the contemporary art scene.

Barceló trained at the School of Arts and Crafts in Palma before enrolling at the Sant Jordi School of Fine Arts in Barcelona, which he left shortly afterwards. He began to show his work in the mid-1970s and, following his participation in the São Paulo Biennial in 1981 and in Documenta 7 in Kassel in 1982, he quickly gained wide international acclaim against the backdrop of the blossoming of new forms of expressionism. Barceló is known above all for his paintings, rich in textures and large in format, with images that emerge from the viscosity of his medium. His work, of tremendous visceral intensity but at the same time profoundly reflective, is full of cultural references ranging from rock paintings to contemporary art and incorporates and recreates matter, organic life and time in its themes and physically.



Barceló in Mali, 1991. Photo: © Jean Marie del Moral.

Barceló began to create using clay in 1994 during a trip to Mali when strong winds made it impossible for him to paint and draw because it covered his works in dust. This led him to experiment using this new material, which influenced him and affected core aspects of his work. When he returned home, Barceló continued to learn the technique of ceramics and developed a vocabulary of his own in this medium. He often uses traditional pot forms, which he deforms or perforates and decorates with images of fruit, vegetables, loaves of bread, fish crustaceans and molluscs. In addition, he makes veritable sculptures in the shape of animals and skulls, piled one on top of another. In 1999, he worked at a specialist pottery studio in Les Rairies (France) and in 2001 at the historic studio of Vincenzo Santoriello in Vietri sul Mare near Naples (Italy). In 2008, Barceló purchased a *teulera* (a traditional tile factory and pottery) in Vilafranca de Bonany on Mallorca. By this time, ceramics was already an extremely important part of his work and he was experimenting with pigments and colours with tremendous skill.

‘Ceramics is expanded painting. The process of firing: hardening what was soft (like painting) imbues it with importance. Ceramics is the mother of painting.’



Barceló in the Vilafranca de Bonany workshop, Mallorca, 2023. Photo: © Jean Marie del Moral.

Barceló acknowledges that for him there is no difference between painting and ceramics and, as a result, his ceramic art is a kind of extension of his painting. As he puts it: ‘It is the medium that best captures flaws and imperfections’. The fact is that, as in the rest of his artistic output, Barceló makes the most of the properties of his medium: clay’s malleable essence and its capacity for transformation and signification. Barceló’s origins and Mediterranean culture are part of his particular dialogue with the land and ceramics. He has created over 4,000 ceramic works, which reproduce many of his characteristic themes and motifs and he has even employed clay in one of his most iconic works, the decoration of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in Mallorca Cathedral (2004).

The exhibition *Barceló. Ceramics: We Are All Greeks* – the title of which is a quotation from the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was, like Barceló, fascinated by Greek culture – charts the artist’s career over a period of three decades, from his early works in Africa in 1994 to his most recent artworks. Featuring over a hundred pieces, this retrospective is the largest held to date of Barceló’s work in clay. Curated by Enrique Juncosa, the display is organised chronologically and is complemented with paintings and sketchbooks related to the ceramic exhibits, and also includes a bronze sculpture. •

Header image:
Poulpe à l’envers, 2001 © Miquel Barceló, VEGAP, Barcelona, 2024

Next exhibition:
«Stone»
4 October 2024
to 2 February 2025

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