

**CONNIE AUGOUSTINOS:
KERAMOS**

JAMFACTORY
GALLERY TWO

ORIGIN STORIES

The word *keramos* (of which the word 'ceramic' was derived, literally meaning 'burned earth') was chosen as the title of ceramic artist Connie Augoustinos's first solo exhibition, not only for its classical Greek etymology but also for its allusions to the origins of ceramic practices. Connie's clay vessels draw on sculptural traditions of earlier cultures. She references antiquities in her forms while referencing Greek mythology in her subject matter, as in: *Ode to Chloris' Elysium*, 2019 and *Aphrodite's cleanse*, 2019. The coiling and pinching methods she predominantly applies to her hand-built forms is a rudimentary process, used to shape clay objects for thousands of years. Her intuitive finger imprints give her surfaces a raw, textural quality reminiscent of Neolithic artefacts.

Raised within a Greek migrant family in Adelaide, she fondly remembers time spent with her grandmothers – both makers in the more traditional female sense – one, a great cook, the other a skilled seamstress. In 2018, Connie undertook a residency on the Greek Island of Skopelos. She was captivated by the contrast of light and colour of this unique island that is reflected in the shimmering incandescence imbued in the surfaces of her clay objects. Exploring her ancestral homeland was a pivotal experience for Connie, giving her an endless source of inspiration as well as a sense of belonging. Her clay vessels and forms in *Keramos* are translations of these experiences. Connie describes her practice as 'weaving together the past and the present,' her works stand as figures that bridge the gap between the ancient and the contemporary.

Working in a range of clay-bodies – red, dark, buff and white stoneware, Connie often applies a calcium matte glaze to her vessels, a traditional recipe made in varying shades of seashell pinks and ivories. They are the colours collected along the Aegean shoreline and closer to home on the coast of South Australia. They are also hues that reference the human body, particularly the blushed, fleshy realities of the female nude. The creased, dimpled brightness of her vessels are reminiscent of historical depictions of Venus – both erotic and divine. Her recent applications of mother of pearl lustre lie somewhere between oceanic treasure and the nostalgia of ornamental kitsch. Connie's forms embody both high and low art forms. They are primitive, yet contemporary, subtle yet complex. She describes her work as:

...a constant search for finding balance in the physical and metaphorical: old/ new, gloss/ dull, natural/ synthetic, soft/ firm, real/ unreal.

Connie creates objects with untold cultural and ritual importance. In the large wall piece *Stella's phiale*, 2019, she considers the form and function of an Ancient Greek phiale or 'libation bowl'. Used in many religions of antiquity and in current cultures, this vessel offers liquid or grains such as rice to a god or spirit, or in memory of those who have died. Stella is the name of Connie's late grandmother (her yia-yia). The phiale is a commemoration of her passing.

A diversity of influences provides the impetus to drive Connie's creativity – childhood memories, nature, landscape and music – her studio wall currently includes photographs of ancient artefacts, flowers by Irving Penn, a shell grotto and a shimmering sunset reflected on the surface of the ocean. This, alongside a cover image of the 1965 Ladybird Book 'Seashells and Seashell Life'. There is a large degree of personal, emotional involvement in Connie's works. Working in clay, the substance

of the earth and the processes which shape it are another important reference point for Connie. Her finger prints stamp and commemorate each piece as uniquely her own. The slowness of hand-building her forms invokes long periods of concentration, arousing a meditative state in the artist. In her own words:

I want to evoke a sense of 'otherworldliness' and curiosity in my vessels. Investigating qualities of scale, form and surface are an integral part of my creative process. Larger one-off pieces give me the freedom to create uninhibitedly, whilst smaller series of multiples are great rhythmic exercises.

BIOGRAPHY

Connie Augoustinos is a current tenant at JamFactory. She completed JamFactory's Associate Program in 2017 after specialising in ceramics while studying Visual Arts at the University of South Australia. Her works have been acquired by the Art Gallery of South Australia as well as many collectors and curators. Earlier in 2019 she was displayed at Skepsi Gallery, Melbourne and included in MANIFEST, the Australian Ceramics Association Members Exhibition at the Australian Ceramics Triennale, Tasmania. *Keramos* is a harbinger of an exciting journey forward for this emerging ceramic artist.

CURATOR:
REBECCA FREEZER

ESSAY:
REBECCA FREEZER

EXHIBITOR:
CONNIE AUGOUSTINOS

**CONNIE AUGOUSTINOS:
KERAMOS**

26 JULY - 29 SEPTEMBER 2019
JAMFACTORY
GALLERY TWO

Jam
Factory