

Poetry made clay

CUBIC ROSE

Stony the rose
and its profile

fragile drawing
of the wind

in the desert
pure – without object

Stony the rose
and its profile

fragile drawing
in the wind

In the cubic mirror of the verse

ROSA CÚBICA

Pétrea la rosa
y su perfil

frágil dibujo
del viento

en el desierto
puro – sin objeto

Pétra la rosa
y su perfil

frágil dibuja
en el viento

En el espejo cúbico del verso

Alfonso Alegre Heitzmann

Rose, fragile, stony, profile, cubic... Carme Collell (Vic, 1951) reinforced the essence of her series of pieces called “Cubic rose” with the poetic image offered through the verses of Alfonso Alegre Heitzmann.

Likewise, when one reads the delicate verses of the poet, one cannot help evoking the image, also poetic, of the ceramics of Carme Collell. I once got the opportunity to visit her studio and to discover the artist and her work. Then the need to return there became utterly unavoidable.

What first strikes one about the artist is the thorough and patient elaboration of the pieces. Every piece is unique. Every piece is ‘The Piece’ with capital letters. There are few artists who work the ceramics in such a singular way. Her technique is of a primitive root, apparently simple, yet complex at the same time and of a fully contemporary language. She learned the technique in Uruguay in 1979-1980 from her uncle Josep Collell, painter and ceramist formed in the studio of the painter Torres-Garcia, who in turn later founded a school in Montevideo. It is in this environment Carme Collell learned and started her personal incursion into the world of ceramics.

The artist works unhurriedly. In her studio in Vic, and if she were a dressmaker, she uses previously drawn and cut cardboard models to construct her pieces. Hence the essence of her work, with very clear constructionist connotations, and her willed ambiguous play with related concepts such as architecture, sculpture and painting. The artist understands the ceramic piece as a construction-container hiding something suggesting inside, as a play of relations between form-surface, bidimensional-tridimensional, curved-plain.

Within the spectator, this play sharpens the eternal dualism that ceramic objects often awaken: before the pieces of Carme Collell, the subtle dividing line between object and sculpture only disconcerts even more. Not in vain. Her pieces are not excessively monumental. The artist wants to maintain in every moment the inevitable impulse that the ceramic object provokes: the tension between the sight's simple delectation of what is suggested, and the desire to surpass it to caress, hold and follow the delicate contour of the pieces.

The work of Carme Collell seems to exist to delight the visual and tactile senses. Playing with the space allows her to work the surface of the piece as a pictorial support: the plain walls are like the canvas of the painter. And the final result seems an aquarelle.

She obtains the pictorial semblance of her pieces with diluted slips: the pieces, when dry and before being put into the kiln, are painted with slips made by herself, treating the surfaces as if they were the walls of a fresco. The artist tries only to leave a little way open for improvisation: the colours with which she covers every piece are the very ones we can contemplate once they have been taken out of the kiln, without surprises.

Once the pieces have been greased and patiently burnished, they are put in the kiln once and at 1080°C. This primitive and at the same time complex technique covers the artist's pieces with a 'skin' that seems silky and satin enhancing their visual warmth with the chromatic palette she uses: earth, intense blue, touch of white, black and luminous yellow.

The result of every piece surprises: Nocturne, About Blue, Shipwreck Blue, the Cubic Roses... Thoroughly worked forms with soft contours, perfect angles, implying, evoking and suggesting objects. A celebration for the senses. Poetry made clay.