

CERAMICS EXHIBITION

NEW | ANTIQUITY

IVA BÖHM



Archaeological Museum in Zagreb
2-31 July 2026





This publication has been produced
to accompany the exhibition "New Antiquity"
by Iva Böhm held at the Archaeological Museum
in Zagreb from 2 to 31 July 2026.



Publisher

Iva Böhm

Foreword

Iva Körbler

Exhibition curator

Iva Körbler

Visual set-up

Iva Böhm

Technical installation

Ivan Troha

Photographs

Andrija Zelmanović

Printed by

Stega-tisak d.o.o., Zagreb, 2026.

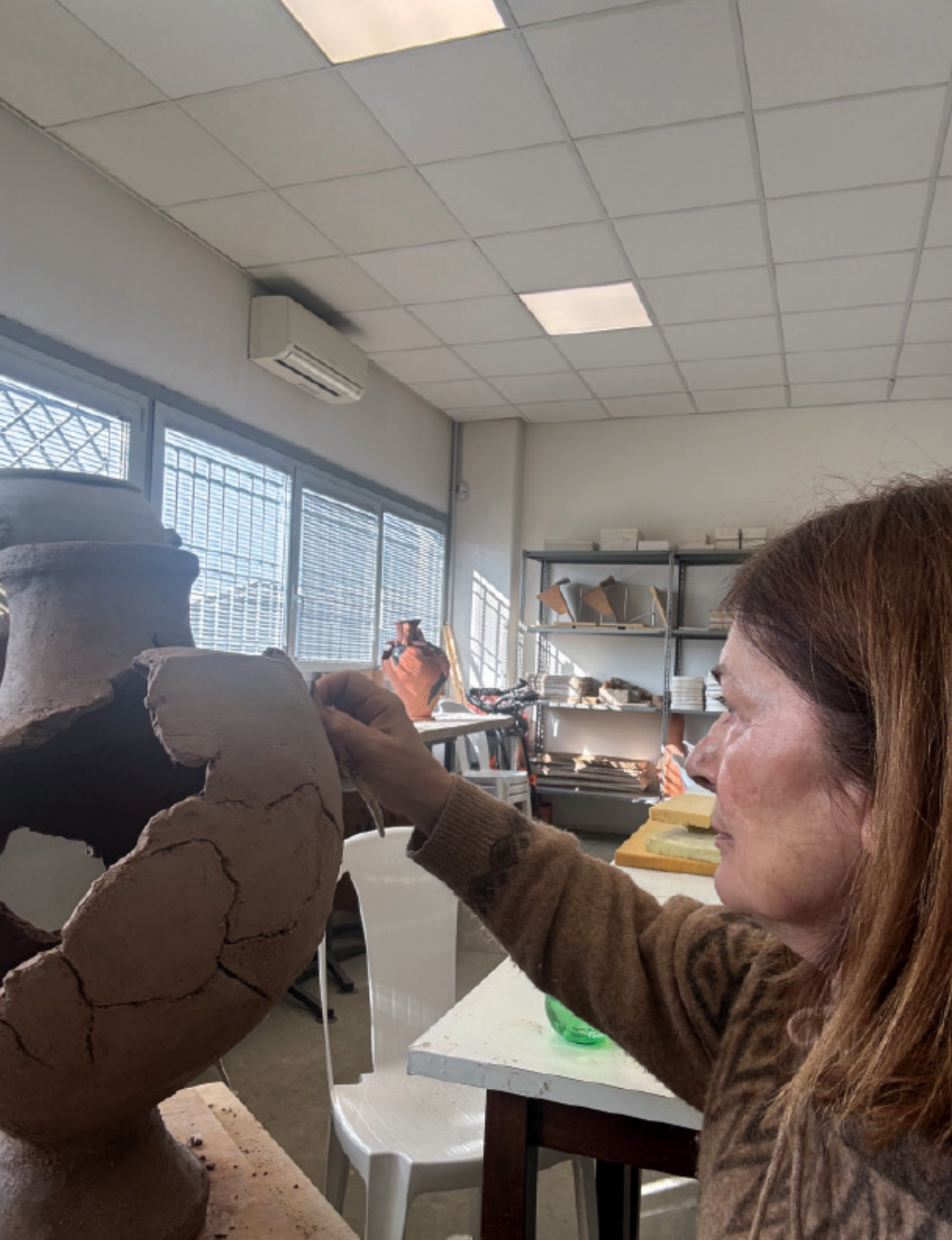
Print run

200 copies

ISBN 978-953-47202-0-2

Iva Böhm

NEW ANTIQUITY



To my granddad, Matej Pavletić, with heartfelt gratitude

New Antiquity

Iva Böhm's exhibition concept constitutes an extensive synthesis and interpretation of a personal and familial narrative, functioning also as an artistic metaphor articulated through diverse materials and media of creative expression. It examines how family memorabilia persist over time, shaping individual destinies and worldviews.

The archaeological collection assembled by her grandfather, Matej Pavletić, today in the holdings of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, serves as the point of departure for the various narratives underpinning Iva Böhm's immersive installations across four rooms of the museum. Indeed, her engagement with this extensive collection of prehistoric, ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman objects constituted an integral part of her childhood and upbringing; she was permitted to touch and handle the objects, and even to play with certain pieces, including a bracelet that has now become the template for a sculptural installation.

Such close contact with artistic artefacts of exceptional value shaped the artist's sensibility, predetermining her professional choices later in life. Moreover, it could be argued that work on this exhibition effectively began in her childhood, during which she absorbed the imagery of these objects, along with their meaning, symbolism, metaphorical content and energy. Her family history thus emerges as an untouched artistic template possessing authentic value. The exhibition spans a vast temporal arc while simultaneously leaping across it, functioning as an artistic diary that connects the lives of grandfather and granddaughter.

Iva Böhm points out that the works are linked, in terms of meaning, through a contemporary reinterpretation of fragments, disappearance, memory and civilisational disintegration. Through ceramic sculptures, murals and installations, she examines the relationship between history and the contemporary world, characterised by war, migration and uncertainty, whilst ontological connections remain constant; humanity and empathy remain unaffected by the passage of time.

The exhibition's starting point is a small lacrimatorium, an ancient vessel for tears with its liquid contents still preserved, an object inherited by Iva Böhm from her grandfather and, in essence, a symbol of pain and loss, the composition of which has yet to be fully determined scientifically. The lacrimatorium becomes the focal point of the narrative, and its history alone could make for an exciting adventure-science novel. From a contemporary perspective, it functions as a symbol of the family histories of all

people, in all countries, across all (these) regions, and throughout all the world wars and socio-political systems. It embodies the mourned departures of all fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers (and further into the past), who were compelled by work to leave their families, thereby threading through it the subtheme of wars and migrations across every period and place for as long as human history has existed.

With this overarching concept, the artist seeks to highlight that the works establish a dialogue between the ancient world and contemporary civilisation around the theme of the disintegration of values and the erosion of humanity, processes that are once again becoming frighteningly recognisable. Destruction, recurring across a series of works, becomes a determining conceptual element, such that "New Antiquity" is presented through the fragmentation of clay vases, murals and ceramic sculptures of mythological figures. The sculptures, in their decomposed and fragmented form, function as clear carriers of meaning, whereby cracks, breaks, openings and erosion become constructive elements laden with metaphor.

The expressive system is grounded in contemporary artistic ceramic sculpture, the fragmentation of volume, modular construction, and a combination of archaic and post-minimalist strategies. Ceramics is not treated as a decorative medium but rather as a material of memory, construction and ruin, and indeed of duration, drawing on the tradition of modern and contemporary organic and abstract sculpture. The processual nature of the execution is also of considerable importance throughout the concept: the time invested in producing the artefacts, and the careful firing of the terracotta into which new meanings are impressed. Craftsmanship and the alchemy of material transformation occupy a significant share of this process.

The first exhibition room presents an enlarged sculptural simulation of a bronze bracelet that Iva Böhm received as a young girl from her grandfather and broke on the very day she wore it. This installation transports us directly into the artist's childhood and the family memory of her grandfather as a collector. It functions as an introduction to the collection of ancient objects as artefacts of emotional and civilisational trace, as well as the atmosphere within which the artist formed her humanistic and cultural identity and worldview. The circular form symbolises the recurrence of experiences and family heritage within a time that is not linear.

We then encounter the so-called decomposed vases, bearing the names of the ancient goddesses Aphrodite, Persephone and Eurydice, which, through their mythical biographies and the symbolism of the female body, function as symbols of women "who wait". The point of departure is the ancient amphora form; however, destruction – or a spatially hollowed-out mass – constitutes the work's primary structural support. Open cracks and absent sections of volume are treated as active spaces rather than as instances of damage. Traces of firing, cracking and carbonised intervention evoke an archaeological artefact and the memory of the object, while simultaneously functioning as a thoroughly contemporary meditation on transience and civilisational collapse. "Emptiness becomes memory," the artist explains.

The sculpture on the mast depicts a ring-shaped rusk (*baškot*), reinterpreting this maritime symbol of survival and hope. The form, rendered in terracotta, is reduced almost to the level of an archetype, functioning as a ritual sign or amulet, a symbol of infinity and the cycle of departure and return, as well as protection. The mast symbolises a connection with the sea, with travel and with survival.

The large ceramic murals represent memory maps dedicated to her grandfather. The mural "Diary" employs the technique of decalcomania, transferring handwritten text onto a ceramic surface, whereby a private record is transformed into a permanent visual trace. These objects are simultaneously archival and intimate, while being executed in a monumental format. Ceramics here mimics parchment or an archaeological document.

The mural "Lumen avi", composed of over a hundred terracotta tealights, develops a modular principle together with the Mediterranean symbolism of light. Repeating small ceramic elements builds up a figure of her grandfather in a coat, "almost like a pixelated memory or a collective relief". Each tealight functions as an individual sign, yet it is only collectively that they form a unified whole and a portrait of "Grandad", whose light of spirit and soul continues to shine to this day.

The second room is reserved for the original ancient lacrimatorium from the era of Emperor Augustus, accompanied by photographs and recordings documenting the procedure and process of analysing its interior contents. On this occasion, the "Teardrops" vessel, with its preserved liquid, is being publicly exhibited for the first time. Having been the subject of scientific investigation for years, ranging from analysis at the Ruder Bošković Institute to MRI imaging at RWTH Aachen University, where traces of sodium and sediment were identified without the presence of oil or alcohol, the small vessel nonetheless remains a mystery pending the completion of further planned analyses. The liquid suggests corporeality, the form appears animate, and within the museum

space it constitutes a rare representation of intimate suffering, also interpreted in ceramic form. Video documentation of the research is presented, together with an expert report produced by German physicists.

Within the context of the exhibition, the small glass vessel is transformed into an organic, human form. Symbolically, it shifts from archaeological precision towards fluidity, softness and vulnerability. Its ceramic interpretation functions as a kind of membrane between body, memory and ancient relic. The surface remains sensitive and almost skin-like, while the volume is no longer stable, but instead pulsating. It is as elusive as our unrecorded family history, our memories, and the curves of time that frequently deceive us later in life. As a connection to the present, the artist has also positioned two large weeping vessels, since weeping, within human and family history, never truly ends.

In the third room, the exhibition presents a cycle of nine mythological figures, namely Icarus, Hephaestus, Gaia, Athena, Medusa, Zeus, Jason, Poseidon and Kairos, reinterpreted through contemporary ceramic transformation within the medium of the sculpture-object. The figures are reduced to a sign, a fragment, an energy or a psychological state. For the artist, myth thus departs from narrative and becomes a contemporary existential image. The sculptures are based on a combination of geometric and organic volumes, with eroded surfaces across which light breaks irregularly, evoking a sense of volcanic or archaeological matter.

Alongside these dangerous and capricious deities and mythological figures, two monumental murals within the same room, "Odyssey" and "Migrants' Diaries", develop the concept of the Mediterranean as a eternal space of travel, migration, danger and civilisational memory. The map operates not merely on a geographical level but also an emotional one, functioning as a space of memory, loss and continuous movement. The modular ceramic surface resembles an eroded relief or a satellite representation of civilisation. Through the combination of relief / panels, sculpture and immersive installation, the artist intensifies the dramatic effect and the semantic weight of the narrative metaphors upon the observer, thereby emphasising the interweaving of spatial-temporal matrices and the dimensions of individual, familial and broader human history across the Mediterranean.

In the fourth room, we encounter the installation "Nemesis" alongside the mural "Dormies; numquam expergisceris". Any trace of idyll or sentiment has disappeared entirely; we now find ourselves situated within the recent period of human history. This constitutes an abrupt transition from archaic memory into a contemporary world characterised by insecurity, digital surveillance and war. The installation of black birds, "Nemesis", which

already possess an ominous mythological character in themselves, functions as a swarm of drones directed at the fractured mural, resembling a nightmare. The work consequently bears the characteristics of brutalist and post-minimalist ceramic sculpture. Geometrically fragmented volumes, sharp incisions and a carbonised black surface reject ceramics as a decorative medium, transforming it instead into a sign of threat, ruin and collective anxiety. The multiplication of forms generates an installation that functions as a psychological landscape of war. A single form may constitute a sign or an object, whereas numerous identical forms transform the space into a collective threat.

The shattered mural “Dormies; numquam expergisceris” functions, for the artist, as a symbol of civilisational collapse, while the bird-drones serve as contemporary equivalents of mythical threats. At this point, through an effective scenographic arrangement, the exhibition comes to a halt in the present moment, within a world of surveillance, wars and an uncertain future, leaving the questions of humanity and hope unresolved. Those occupying positions of power pursue their own parallel agendas, artists and philosophers attempt to rectify disturbances within the matrix, while small family destinies once again undergo great trials, separations and migrations.

Within her complex and dynamic family history, Iva Böhm has found the strength to create an artistic and cultural environment that lends itself to multiple interpretations, given that it is impossible to perceive the exhibition neutrally, without (un)consciously drawing parallels with one's own family histories and memories. These are spaces of rupture, overlap, interconnection and the recreation of family memories, in which every family, across every generation, remembers at least one departure from home, whether due to work, famine or war. Cycles of time and history are once again overlapping at this very moment, bringing to the surface memories of earlier world wars, with many families in this region recalling events as far back as the Napoleonic era. We find ourselves moving in circles. Each of us keeps our own family fragments displayed behind glass, items that have, against all odds, survived wars, displacements, journeys and forced flight. This may explain why the sculptural bracelet installation at the beginning of the exhibition is rendered in such a sombre shade of green, why the lacrimatoria appear as a recurring constant, and why the ceramic vases appear as if they had been struck by shellfire, pointing prophetically towards the arduous battle to preserve Mediterranean cultures and heritage – and indeed humanity.

Iva Körbler

My grandfather Matej Pavletić spent his childhood in a large seafaring family, first in Krasica, then in Suez and Port Said, where his father worked, and later in Senj, where he attended grammar school. From an early age he was drawn to art, archaeology and history – the years he spent in Egypt played a pivotal role in shaping those interests.

After finishing school, he lived in Paris for several years before moving to Sisak, where he worked as a postmaster. It was there that his passion for collecting truly took root and expanded, fuelled by the proximity of an important Roman archaeological site.

He remained a lifelong learner, continuing to study subjects as diverse as Esperanto and, with limited success, English even after his 90th birthday. He was an avid reader, especially of historical works, and frequently returned to authors such as Herodotus and Tacitus...

Gentle and even-tempered by nature, he could easily be moved to tears by sadness or heartfelt emotion.

My grandmother Dragica, was both his staunchest supporter and his soulmate. With remarkable patience, she bore the continual financial constraints that accompanied his collecting pursuits.

He was such a wonderful grandad, and I remember many anecdotes from our time together. On one occasion, after having played truant from grammar school rather too often, I sent him to deal with it on my behalf. He arrived wearing his old, oversized coat, carrying the worn school satchel he had kept since his own schooldays and still took everywhere with him. Looking utterly distressed, he said, "Please tell me, what has my only granddaughter done? You understand, she's all I have." No one could bring themselves to upset such an elderly man, who looked as though he might burst into tears at any moment, so they eventually told me that I was not to send my grandfather to school again. Only after his death did I learn that he had kept a diary recording details of my life until I came of age. He wrote about all my friends and, commenting on my teenage years, observed that I had become "rather impertinent". His manner of speaking was somewhat old-fashioned, which is understandable considering the era in which he was born.

He was a distinguished and memorable figure, with a prominent nose and a slightly drooping shoulder, making him a favourite subject among his artist friends.

My mother Iva regarded his dedication to collecting as something of a burden, whereas I never did; by the time I came along, the collection had already been completed.

Grandad was my quiet, patient teacher; he and grandma shared the responsibility of looking after me on a daily basis. In the process, he also cultivated my interest in ancient vessels, amulets and glass... perhaps owing to his manner of speaking about them. The objects I liked best during my childhood were the "Teardrops", which grandad would present to me by way of a small ritual: handled with care, displayed on cotton wool, on special occasions, within the silence of his flat, where the ticking of the clock was the only sound to be heard. He possessed an extensive library, comprising not merely books but also his notes on which he worked daily. He had no desire to own a television, regarding conversation and reading as sufficient in themselves.

He bequeathed to me the most cherished item in the collection, and I continue the work of uncovering the mystery of the small ancient vessel with its preserved liquid.

Iva Böhm



ta je u helenskom
du Saisu u slavu
liju, peti u gradu
isu u slavu Aresu.
ako. Ljudi i žene
ednih i drugih u
rtaljke te čagrcu,
a, a ostale žene i
doplove do ko-
cem k obali, pa
uo, a druge viču
et igraju, a gdje-
d svakoga grada
svetkuju svetko-
loze potroši se
aloj godini. Sa-
ce, i do sedam-
61. To biva tu;
etkovinu, kazao
, i ljudi i žene,
se biju, bilo bi
u, čine još više
o tom se vidi,

zapali u noći
ka pod vedrim
elice pune soli
ori cijelu noć;
. A koji Egip-
u noć, te za-
samo u Saisu,
jetluje i slavi

Butu, prinose
etkuje i žrtve
sunce, nje-
a većina ih

s drvenim kijacima
više od tisuće, koji
djer s kijacima sup
u malenom drvenom
djašnji dan u drugu
koji su oko kipa
koja voze kovčeg i
stoje, ne dadu im
pomažući bogu uda
stane velik boj s ki
mislim, mnogi i um
da bi tko umirao.
da su je za to uvel
sova mati, a Ares,
kad doraste, te za
sluge materine, bu
ne dadu mu, da u
drugoga grada lju
k materi. Za to k
toj svetkovini uvel

64 Da ne va
ne opravši se od
prvi uveli. Ostali
i Helena, leže sa
ulaze u hram a o
i ostale životinje.
vide, gdje se mri
gajcvima; kad da
ni životinje činilo
čine nešto, čega

65. Egipćan
službe božje tiče,
libijskoj, nije baš
ondje, sve se drž
dima, a druge ne
drže svetima, zaš





EXHIBITION

Handwritten text on the leftmost page, possibly a list or index, with some printed text visible at the top.

Handwritten text on the second page from the left, continuing the list or index.

Handwritten text on the third page from the left, continuing the list or index.

Handwritten text on the fourth page from the left, continuing the list or index.

Handwritten text on the fifth page from the left, continuing the list or index.



DIARY

ceramic, decalcomania, 2026

300 x 50 cm, 5 segments 50 x 60 cm





BRACELET

ceramic sculptures and iron
structure, installation, 2025
210 × 210 × 95 cm

PERSEPHONE

ceramic, 2025

36 × 34 × 49 cm



APHRODITE

ceramic, 2025

34 x 34 x 48 cm



EURYDICE

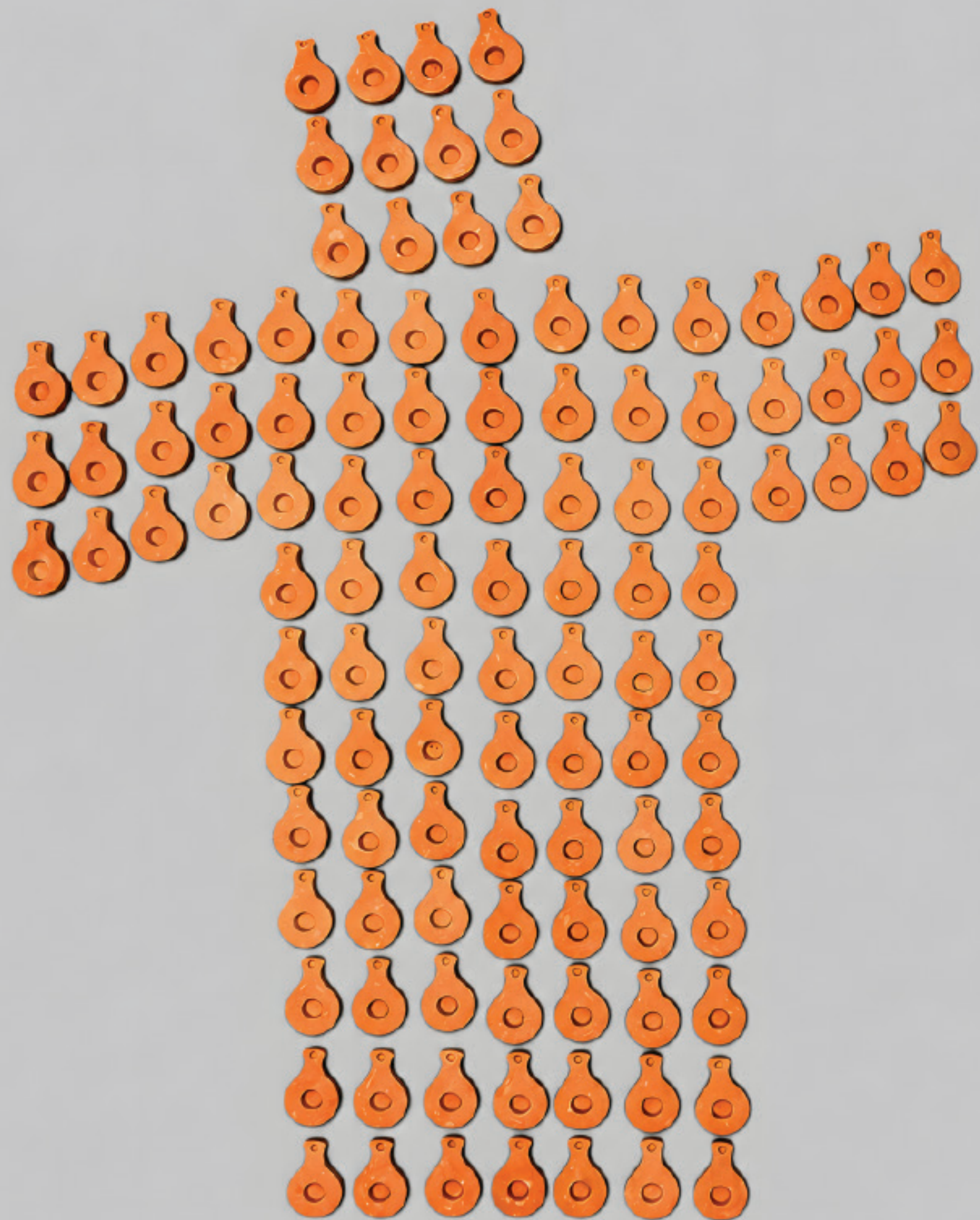
ceramic, 2025

34 x 29 x 47 cm



LUMEN AVI

ceramic, modular mural, 128 tealights, 2026
240 × 320 cm



RUSK (BAŠKOT)

ceramic, wooden structure, 2025

57 × 55 × 10 cm; 300 cm





LACRIMATORIUM FROM THE MATEJ PAVLETIĆ COLLECTION

glass, liquid

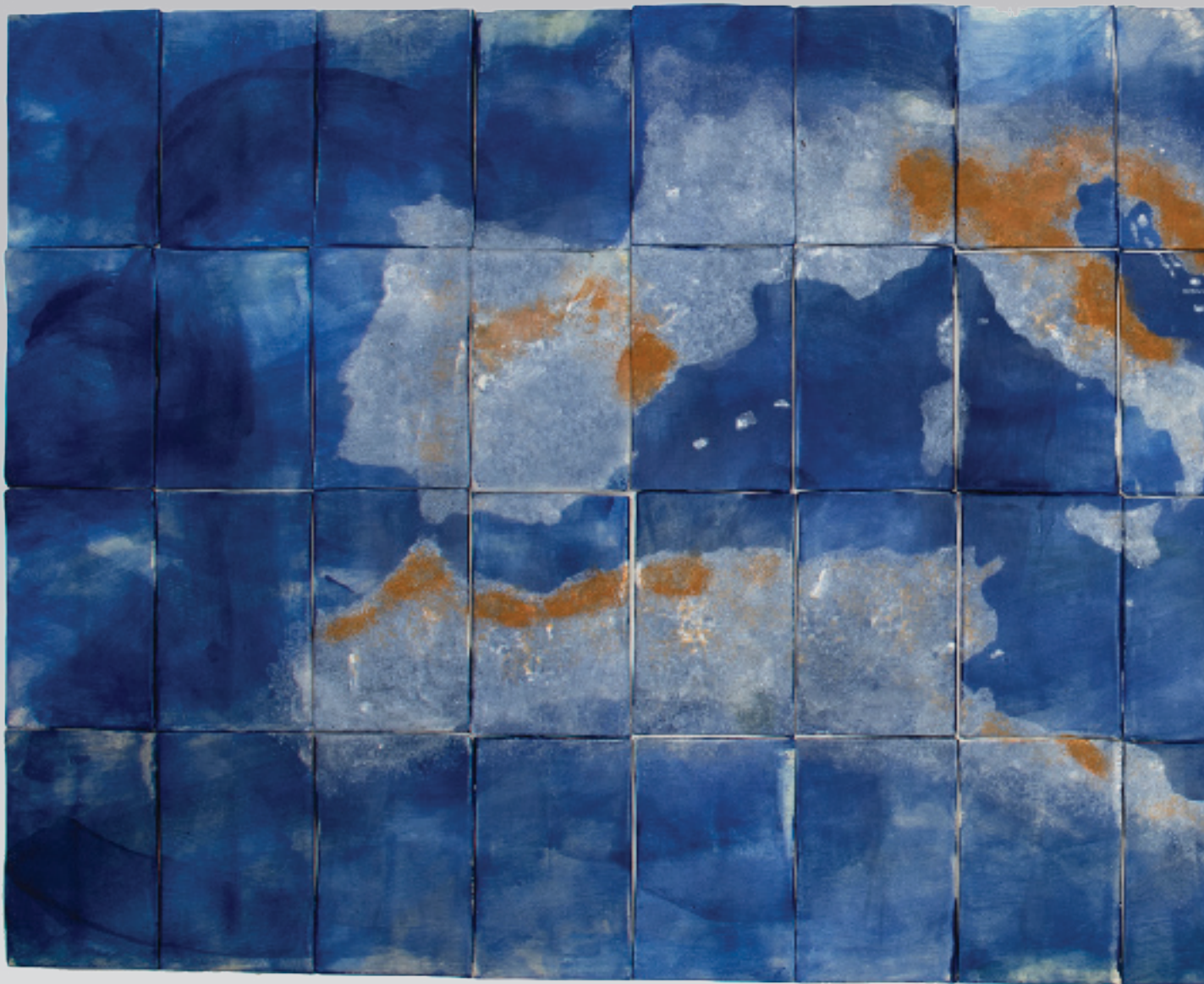
Diameter 46.1 mm, height 56.6 mm, weight 85 g

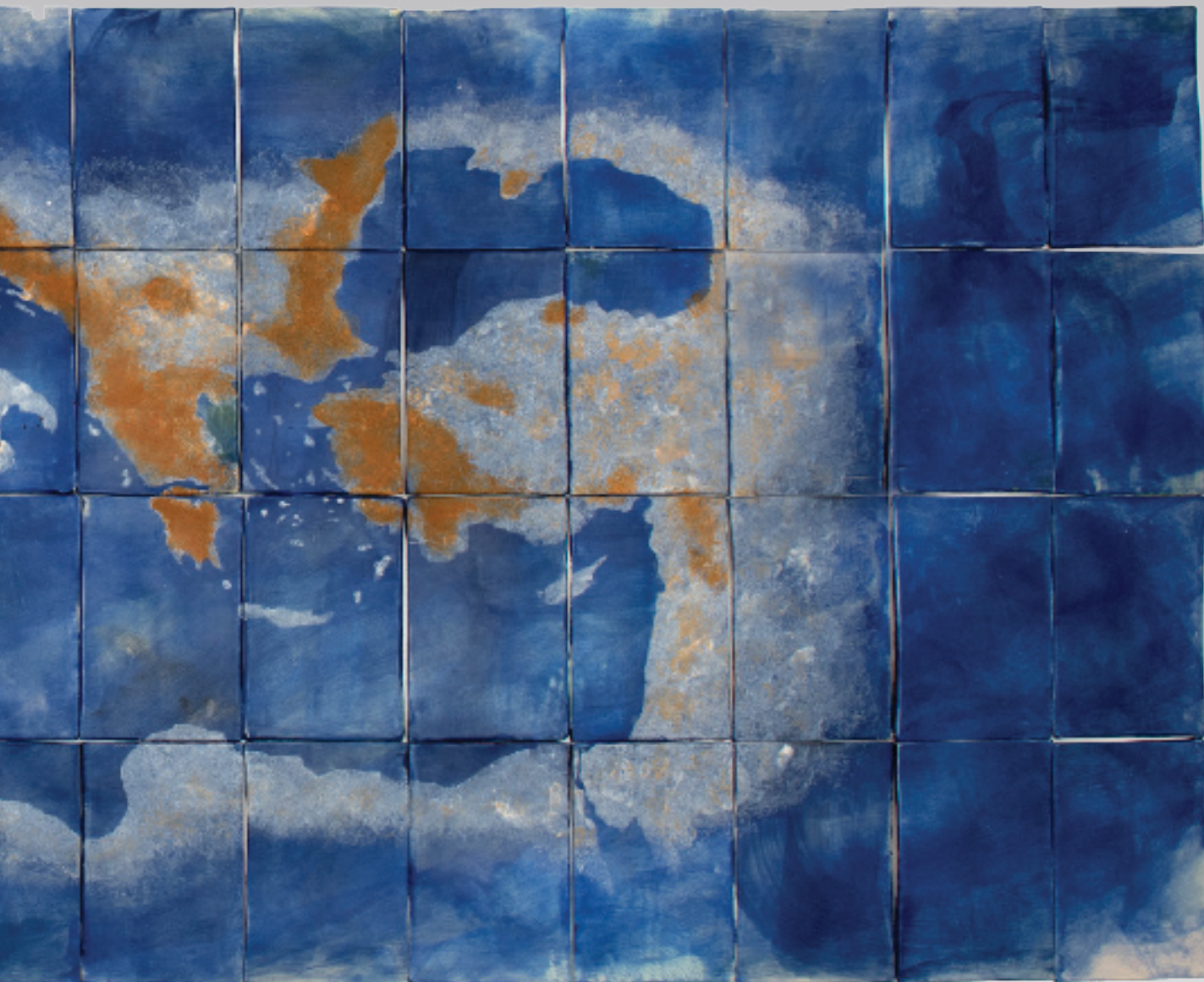


TEARDROPS

ceramic, 2026

54 x 44 x 22 cm





ODYSSEY

ceramic, mural 2026

300 × 120 cm, in segments 20 × 30 cm





MIGRANTS' DIARIES

ceramic, installation, 2026
2 × 18 segments 15 × 30 cm





POSEIDON

ceramic, 2026

45 x 55 x 35 cm

KAIROS

ceramic, 2026

35 x 35 x 70 cm



MEDUSA

ceramic, 2025

29 x 25 x 50 cm



ATHENS

ceramic, 2025

40 × 55 × 10 cm



ICARUS

ceramic, 2026
60 × 45 × 53 cm



HEPHAESTUS

ceramic, 2026

45 x 25 x 40 cm







JASON

ceramic, 2025
60 × 30 × 53 cm

GAIA

ceramic, 2026

50 × 30 × 47 cm



ZEUS

ceramic, 2025
60 x 35 x 60 cm







NEMESIS

ceramic, installation, 2026
24 forms 34 × 24 × 25 cm





**DORMIES NUMQUAM
EXPERGISCERIS**

ceramic, mural, 2026

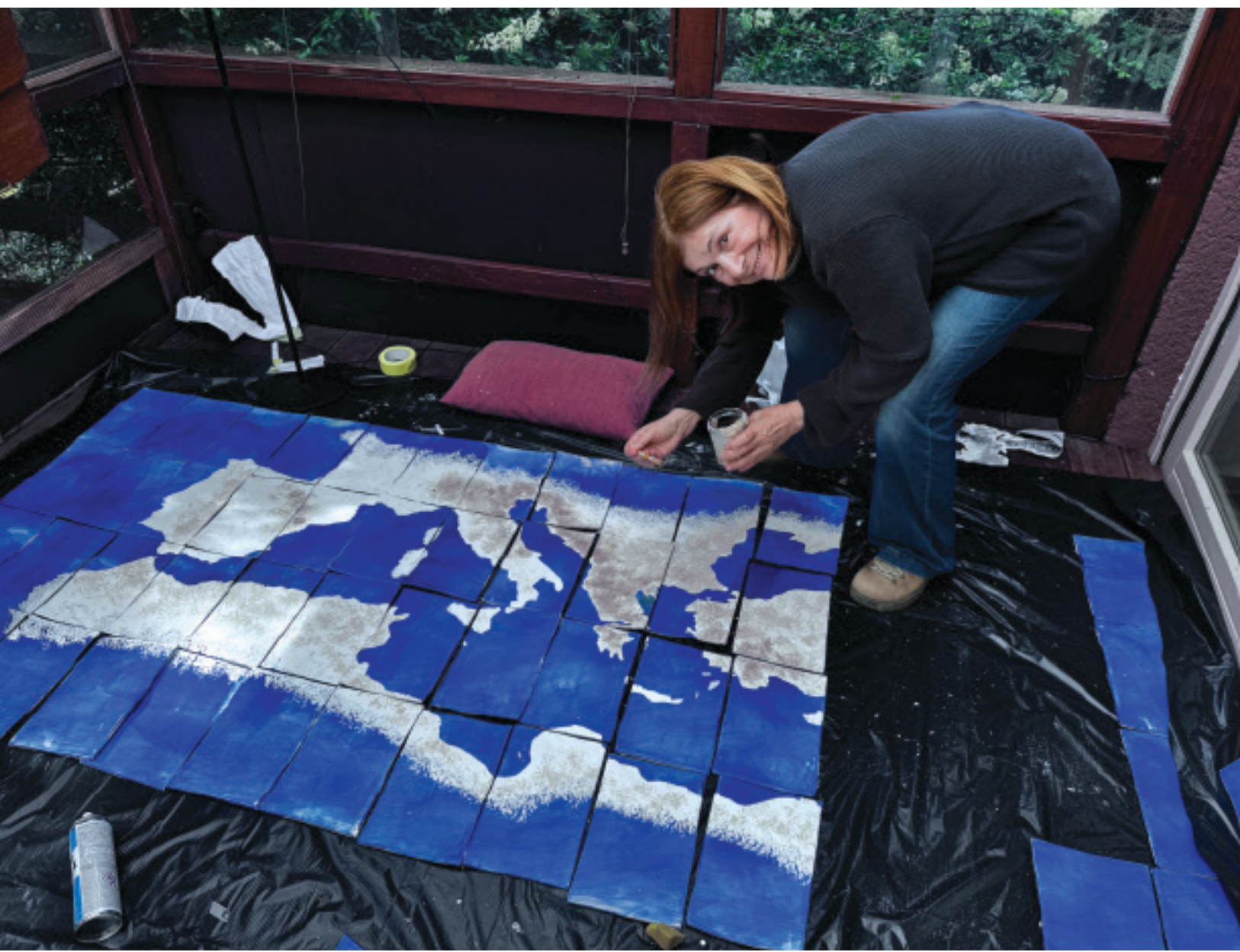
320 × 210 cm, segments 15 × 30 cm

Details









Iva Böhm (Zagreb, 1955) is a member of the Croatian Freelance Artists' Association (HZSU), the Croatian Designers Association (HDD), and the Croatian Association of Artists of the Applied Arts (ULUPUH).

She holds a degree in French language and comparative literature, and undertook further training in product design at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (EnsAD) in Paris, studying under Jean-Claude Maugirard.

She earned a Master's degree in European Studies from the University of Panthéon-Assas in Paris, and pursued further postgraduate studies at Penn State University in State College, USA.

As a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow, she specialised in art therapy, with a particular focus on working with victims of violence. She also completed advanced training at the Institute for Violence and Destructive Behaviour (IVDB) at the University of Oregon.

Böhm regards clay as a material possessing remarkable properties: it does not register pain, it heals following breakage, it undergoes transformation and renewal even after intensive manipulation, it hardens upon exposure to fire, and it consistently yields new surprises.

Her methodology in shaping clay is grounded in spontaneity and intuition, frequently departing from predetermined sketches and frameworks. This process incorporates unconscious elements, permitting the resulting works to develop independently of anticipated rules and preconceptions.

She has held solo exhibitions and participated in group exhibitions, both at home and abroad.

Recent exhibitions

2025

Chocolate Hideaway, Chocolate Museum, Zagreb

Biophilia, Ulupuh Gallery, Zagreb

National Heritage: The Vučedol Dove, Archaeological Museum Gallery (AMZ), Zagreb

Baroque Structures, Contemporary Forms, K-10 Gallery, Varaždin

Interweaving, ULUPUH Gallery, Zagreb

Family Memories, K-10 Gallery, Varaždin

2026.

Black and White World, Modulor Gallery, Zagreb

List of works

1. **Diary** – ceramic, decalcomania, 2026
300×50 cm, 5 segments 50×60 cm
2. **Bracelet** – ceramic sculptures and iron structure, installation, 2025
210×210×95 cm
3. **Persephone** – ceramic, 2025
36×34×49 cm
4. **Aphrodite** – ceramic, 2025
34×34×48 cm
5. **Eurydice** – ceramic, 2025
34×29×47 cm
6. **Lumen avi** – ceramic, modular mural, 128 tealights, 2026
240×320 cm
7. **Rusk (Baškot)** – ceramic, wooden structure, 2025
57×55×10 cm; 300 cm
8. **Teardrops** – ceramic, 2026
54×44×22 cm
9. **Odyssey** – ceramic, mural 2026
300×120 cm, in segments 20×30 cm
10. **Migrants' Diaries** – ceramic, installation, 2026
2×18 segments 15×30 cm
11. **Poseidon** – ceramic, 2026
45×55×35 cm
12. **Kairos** – ceramic, 2026
35×35×70 cm
13. **Medusa** – ceramic, 2025
29×25×50 cm
14. **Athens** – ceramic, 2025
40×55×10 cm
15. **Icarus** – ceramic, 2026
60×45×53 cm
16. **Hephaestus** – ceramic, 2026
45×25×40 cm
17. **Jason** – ceramic, 2025
60×30×53 cm
18. **Gaia** – ceramic, 2026
50×30×47 cm
19. **Zeus** – ceramic, 2025
60×35×60 cm
20. **Nemesis** – ceramic, installation, 2026
24 forms 34×24×25 cm
21. **Dormies numquam expergisceris** – ceramic, mural, 2026
320×210 cm, segments 15×30 cm









ISBN 978-953-47202-0-2



ivabohm.com/exhibitions

amz180