

# Making an

THE FIRST INDIAN CERAMICS  
TRIENNALE HOPES TO CHANGE  
THE WAY THE GENRE IS SEEN —  
AND PRACTICED

*by Archana Khare-Ghose*



# *art of pottery*





Left: Dipalee Daroz, "Relics of Future," 2018; Right: Detail from the installation by Daroz, "Relics of Future."



**A**t the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, a silent revolution is taking place these days. Years from now, it may be seen as the defining moment for ceramics in India, when this genre of art broke free from the constraints of tradition, and when its practitioners began to experiment and create like their compatriots in painting and sculpture.

At least, that's the hope that the ongoing first Indian Ceramics Triennale has inspired.

Titled "Breaking Ground," it indeed is breaking new ground by institutionalizing the push that the genre needs in the form of a triennale, so that the field gets nurtured by experts and acquires a footing as solid as the one enjoyed by painting.



Riyaz Badruddin, "Still Life," 2018.

Right: Aarti Vir, "Shadow Crossing (Doorway 1 detail, Narasimha and Hiranyakashipu)," 2018.



Left: Aarti Vir, "Shadow Crossing (Doorway 3)," 2018.

Ingrid Murphy, "1.0 Touch,"  
2018.

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"It's really important that an attempt such as this was put in place," says Pooja Sood, director general of the Jawahar Kala Kendra (JKK) and one of the key advisors behind the project; the others are Ray Meeker, renowned artist, educator and co-founder of the Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry, and Peter Nagy, director, Nature Morte gallery, New Delhi. The first iteration of the Triennale has been conceived and driven by a six-member curatorial team of mid-career artists — Anjani Khanna, Madhavi Subrahmanian, Neha Kudchadkar, Reyaz Badruddin, Sharbani Das Gupta and Vineet Kacker. The triennale, which began on August 31, is on view through November 18.

"Studio pottery has had very well-known practitioners in India, among whom Devi Prasad (1921-2011) and Daddyji [as Sardar Gurcharan Singh of Delhi Blue Pottery was popularly known] made vital contributions to the development of the art form. But, given its utilitarian nature, it has remained at the periphery for a long time. India





Vipul Kumar, "Nature's Signature," six sculptural pieces, size 24 x 48 x 65 in each., 2018.

has an ancient tradition of pottery but it has also been a long journey for this genre to travel from the workshop of a kumhar (potter) to the studio. Things, however, are now changing and artists are beginning to engage with clay as just another material," Sood said.

The fact that ceramics is largely considered a sub-genre of design and decorative arts, rather than a fine art like painting and sculpture has also been a big reason for its peripheral existence. Internationally, though, the genre has come of age with enough galleries devoted to design and decorative arts, and enough fairs as well. Sood said she feels that the boundary is blurring in India too. "Efforts in the past to create a forum



Sukhdev Rathod, "Migration Memories (detail)," 2018, 15 in dia x 20 discs (wall-mounted installation, stoneware, ceramic).



IMAGE COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND JAWAHAR KALA KENDRA, JAIPUR

**"Containing Time," installation view from National Centre for Craft & Design UK, 2017. Medium: Ceramic bowls, frottages, texts, photographs, poems, soundscape, size variable, 2018.**



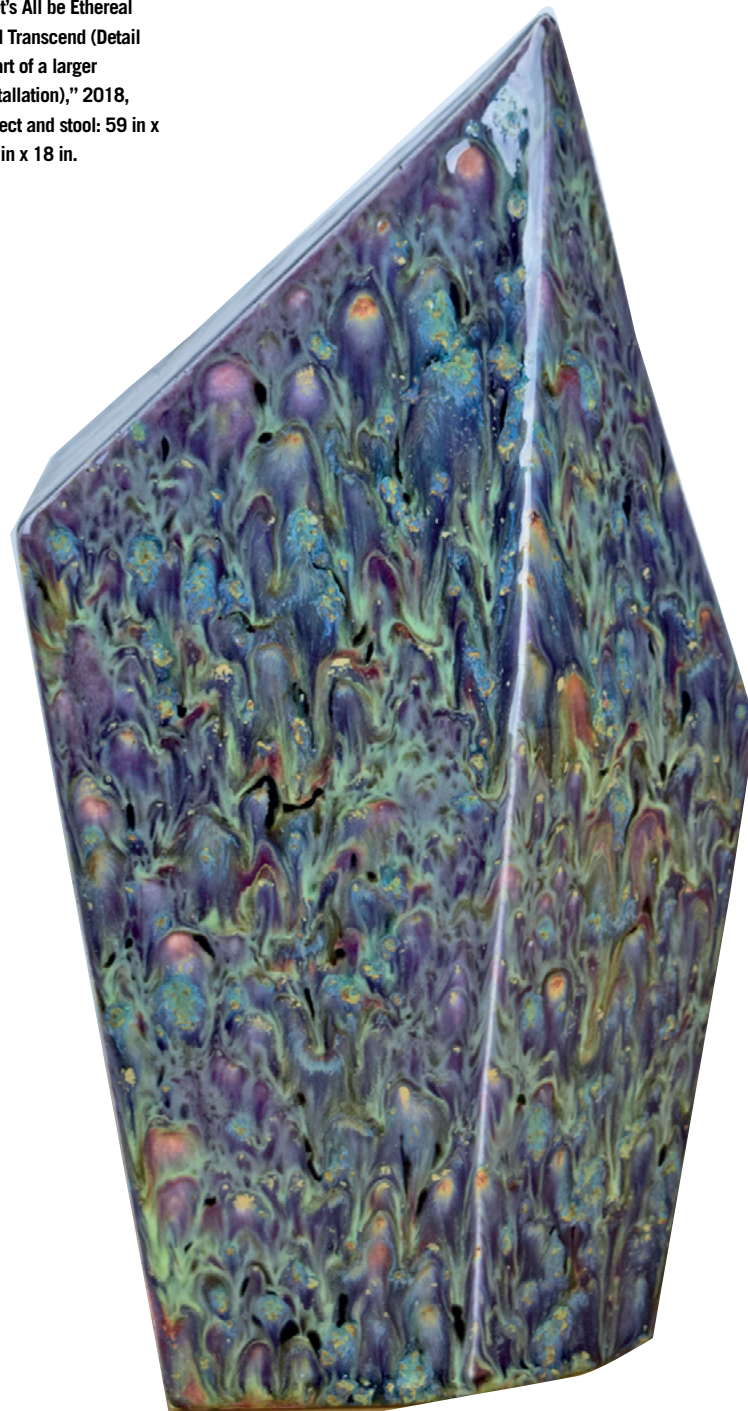
“A Deserted Barcode,”  
by Adil Writer, unfired  
clay and acrylic on  
canvas, 2018, 80 in  
height x 18.6 in depth x  
6/9/18 in width.







Left: Jessika Edgar,  
“Let’s All be Ethereal  
and Transcend (Detail  
/ part of a larger  
installation),” 2018,  
object and stool: 59 in x  
25 in x 18 in.



Above: Jessika Edgar, “Let’s All Be Ethereal and Transcend  
(Detail / part of a larger installation),” 2018, 13 in x 8.5 in x 7 in.



IMAGE COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND JAWAHAR KALA KENDRA, JAIPUR

have ended up being about sales only,” she said. “However, with a showcase such as the triennale, we do away with the need to create only utilitarian objects. An event such as the triennale is not just about pots and pans, it’s also not about the Top 10; it allows the artist to explore and experiment with the material. We have so many fine artists working in the medium in the country today and they need to be made more visible.”

The fact that the triennale received a huge number of applications and had to shortlist to a “doable number” as Sood says, points to the popularity of the medium with artists.

A total of 35 Indian artists are being showcased alongside 12 projects by international artists. The international projects come from the US, UK, Australia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Korea and Switzerland. “We wanted an international feel, to show works being done in India along side those from other countries. It’s a great exposure not just for Indian artists but also for the viewers,” Sood said.

Besides the showcase of works itself, of special significance is the symposium featuring 12 Indian and international speakers that will add to the existing knowledge about the genre and provide a vital academic angle to the

**Rahul Kumar & Chetnaa, “Terra Geometrix (detail),” 2018, 10 ft x 8 ft wall mounted components. in high-fired stoneware clay (series of 220 pieces). “Extended Architectures,” 2018.**

Priya Sundaravalli,  
"Blossoming – Being All  
of Them, She Stands there  
(detail)," 2018, 300 x  
300 x 240 cm, ceramic,  
fiberglass and steel.



IMAGE COURTESY, THE ARTIST AND JAWAHAR KALA KENDRA, JAI PÜR



IMAGE COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND JAWAHAR KALA KENDRA, JAIPUR

practice. Plus, a collaboration with the British Ceramics Biennale has been set up to develop a continuing reciprocal arrangement between British and Indian ceramic artists. Kristine Michael in collaboration with the Delhi Art Gallery, has curated a concurrent exhibition of works by the late Kripal Singh Shekawat, the artist behind the revival of Jaipur Blue pottery.

To use a cliché — the future is open to

a million possibilities. Just as ceramics by Picasso send the collectors into a frenzy, works by top Indian ceramic artists, may someday, sell by signature, as is the case with paintings and sculpture by top selling Indian artists. ✦

— “*The Indian Ceramics Triennale: Breaking Ground*” runs through November 18 at the Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur.

**Antra Sinha, “Communities (detail),” 2018, 120 x 36 x 3 in, ceramic.**