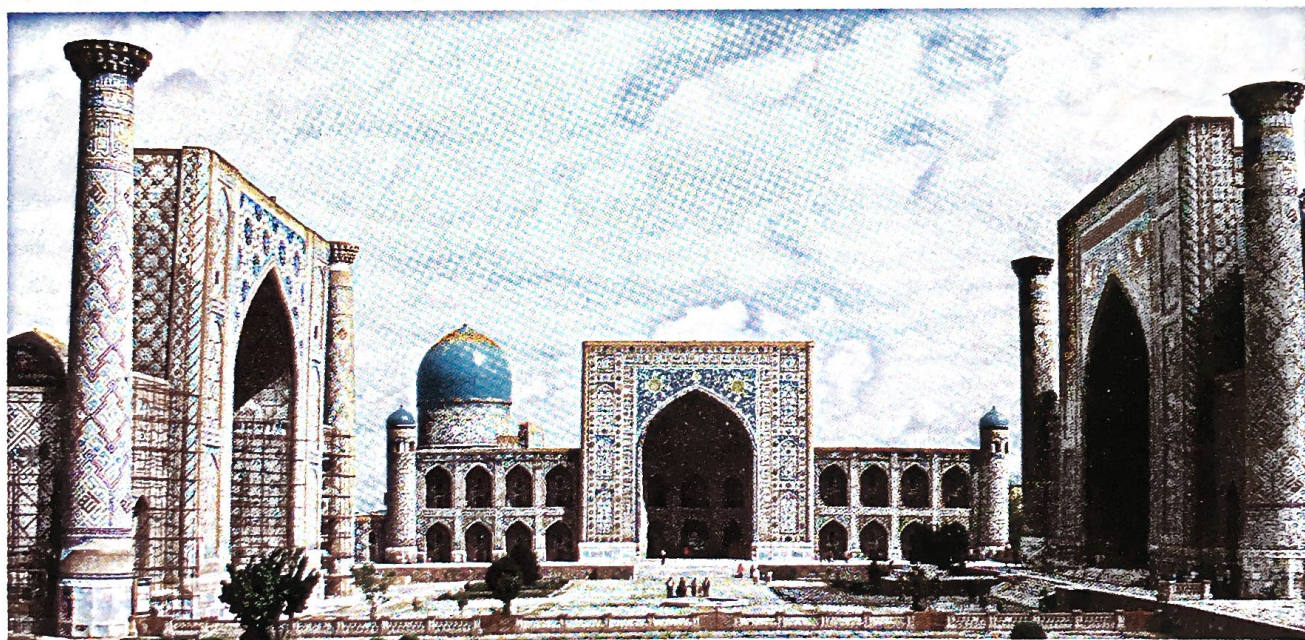


■ ACADEMY OF CERAMICS ■

Reprinted from:

CERAMICS IN ARCHITECTURE



Edited by
P. VINCENZINI

TECHNA - MONOGRAPHS IN MATERIALS AND SOCIETY, 1

**"HABITACIONES"; A CERAMICS, SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE
INTEGRATION, FOR A HUMAN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.**

César CORNEJO A.

Architect, Daniel Alcides Carrión 268, Lima 18, Perú

The best way to understand my work is through the pictures. However, in the next few lines I shall supply a few background details which may help to give a clearer insight into it.

The piece of work I am sending to this congress is part of an experimental piece that I embarked on some time ago in response to a personal interest in architecture. It consists of scaled-down ceramic models with architectural shapes and spaces. The road ahead is long and the exact point of arrival unclear.

One of my favourite childhood memories is the long hours I spent sitting on my bedroom floor kneading plastecine and inventing games, characters linked by a multitude of relationships: Also making buildings with pieces of wood of different sizes, shapes and colours; even though the pieces of wood were all different, as an ensemble they worked wonderfully.

During that period, one of my most cherished dreams was to build a plastecine castle on a natural scale. I planned to make it in my garden; its floors, walls and ceilings would succumb to the pressure of my fingers which would give them shape and create secret corridors through which to escape from terrible persecutions. I remember it as being white; I enjoyed myself imagining it and thinking what a wonderful time I would have inside it.

I have modelled the clay, my fingers have fraced emotions onto it. I have entered its spaces, walked over its uneven floor, touched its walls, felt the dampness of its atmosphere, breathing in the cold air that filters through and caresses my face. I have more than once paused in a dark corner and have lain down to rest on warm earth.

In the design workshop at the University I always felt there were too many constraints for me to act freely. It was more important to comply with the formal requirements than to explore greater depths. The students' rebelliousness almost always died out with the 1 m x 0.75m plans

of impeccable ink drawings and the detailed cardboard models. But cardboard and drawings done with a square did not seem to me the appropriate mediums to shatter the silence of conformity and alienation. All this changed for me half-way through my career when the architects Hugo Iberico and Marcos Rivarola were my tutors in design; at last not only what the student thought was important but, above all, who he or she was. The critiques on my work made by the architect Hugo Iberico, a specialist in semiotics, were very fruitful; I remember the thrill I felt on discovering new things. This was very satisfying. From then on it became increasingly difficult to feel satisfied with what I was taught and with the results of my work; I was compelled to continue exploring. Cardboard was too rigid to convey early «Gaudian» tendencies and pencil and paper were insufficient to explain the spaces I was beginning to visualize. It took me a long time to reach clay and this has been, up to now, the material that has permitted me to explore my investigation in greater depth and thus make my pieces of work very personal and in the process discover both them and myself in them.

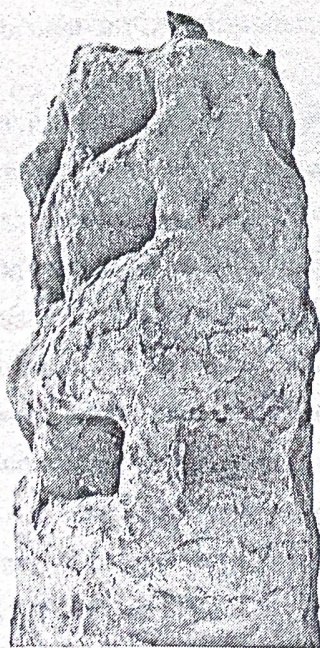


FIGURE 1

One of my most cherished dreams was to build a plastecine castle on a natural scale



FIGURE 2

I have more than once paused in a dark corner and have lain down to rest on warm earth.

I started sculpting in the workshop of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ricardo Palma under the tutorship of Carlos Galarza Aguilar (1926-1991), an experience that was particularly important for me as he insisted on his students attempting to combine architecture and sculpture. After some time of learning in different workshops and experimenting with various materials, I came into contact with ceramics and found it to be the ideal means for expressing the feelings and thoughts that I had been developing on an architectural level.

Several times I have bought a hundred kilos of clay. I have kneaded and modelled it, I have fired it, painted it and fired it again and I have inhabited it.

Along the way I recall two readings that particularly motivated me: the book «The Prodigious Builders» by Bernard Rudofsky and notes on architecture as sculpture written by Frederick J. Kiesler. I am also especially interested in the work of Antonio Gaudí and in the free structures of André Bloc.

Part of the work I am presenting was exhibited in the Art Gallery of the Peruvian-North American Cultural Institute in Miraflores in August 1993. The exhibition attracted the attention of colleagues and the press. In the following lines I quote from some of the commentaries made on it.

«César is a long way from direct and simple allusion, from explicit and lineal discourse, from structuralist metaphorical evocation and post-modern intertextuality. His pieces of work are sparks of light and at the same time fragments of his interior theory. They are scarcely bridges stretching out to feelings. Taken as a whole they construct their own reference.

At sufficient distance from an initial contact with the intense images of another poet of contemporary construction, Antonio Gaudí, César Cornejo's objects are a long way from artistic fashion and populist concessions. They are the expressionist specialization of a restrained cry, a scaled-down materialization of an empty chamber submerged in the silence of a memory.

They are constructed looking at each other, looking at and recreating a new form of nature; in the last instance, looking at and going deep within themselves». ¹

«Whoever has read the story «El Informe de Brodie» by the renowned writer Jorge Luis Borges, will agree that the sculptures of César Cornejo, shown in the photograph, likewise has the ambiguous atmosphere of the indefinite in the most poetic sense of the word. Amidst this atmosphere, that looks as if it had arisen from a timeless desert or an extraordinarily solitary steppe, a civilization of almost spontaneous emergence and which after reaching its

peak began to tumble towards the most horrific decadence, he has left remains of a glorious past, ruins remodelled by the tongue of time and the wind. I do not know what the sculptor may have been feeling while sculpting what could be termed a primordial cry. He is an architect and therefore well accustomed to expressing a feeling in three dimensions, materializing it and giving it shape and life. Comejo may have wanted to distance himself from his academic training in order to arrive at «his» sculpture, creating «his» nature, much as Borges created his unpredictable world». ²



FIGURE 3

Clay and silence are my tools for design

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who in one way or another have collaborated in making this work possible. Specially the architects Hugo Iberico, José Niño, and Juan Romero for their valuable commentaries and guidance. My parents for the plastecine and everything else and my girlfriend Mimi for always being at my side with her sound opinions and advice.

A final thanks to Stephanie Rendel-Dunn who translated this paper for me.

REFERENCES

- 1) H. IBERICO, César Comejo's Habitaciones, a preface for a catalog (1993)
- 2) EL COMERCIO NEWSPAPER SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT, La Habitación de Comejo M2(1993)81016