Miquel Barceló: Shigaraki Ceramics

Fergus McCaffrey Tokyo

September 9 – December 13, 2025

Closed on Sun, Mon, holidays [Opens on Sun, Nov 9 for Art Week Tokyo]

Fergus McCaffrey

"All painting comes from clay. That's something Picasso and Miró discovered, and I was lucky enough to discover it at a slightly less advanced age than they did."

Miquel Barceló, 2015

Fergus McCaffrey Tokyo is proud to present our first exhibition with the renowned Spanish artist Miquel Barceló (b. 1957). The exhibition *Shigaraki Ceramics* features fourteen works produced in 2023 in collaboration with ceramic artist Kazuya Furutani (b. 1976).

Fish and Crabs, 2023. Clay. 49 x 45 x 47cm.
Photo by Ryuichi Maruo.

Barceló's work exhibits a raw and rugged expression that captures the immediacy of gesture, addressing timeless and universal human concerns with the cycle of life, the wonder of nature, the presence of myth, and the meaning of human existence. Travelling extensively in Africa and Asia since his youth, he has studied and learned from ancient traditions such as Dogon in Mali and Jomon in Japan; with this knowledge, he has established his unique style in painting, ceramic, and sculpture which demonstrates a rugged authority and materiality. Plugging into a deep vein of human emotion and consciousness, Barceló's expressive force and transcendent form have married ancient techniques with the tactile directness of Jean Dubuffet, Yves Klein, and Lucio Fontana.

Early recognition of Barceló's paintings occurred at the 1981 Sao Paolo Biennial and then at Documenta 7 in 1982, where the acclaimed curator Rudi Fuchs exhibited Barceló's works alongside the German *Neo-Expressionist* and Italian *Transavantgardia* artists that were rapidly gaining recognition. Representation by the legendary art dealers Bruno Bischofberger and Leo Castelli followed in 1984 and 1986 establishing Barceló's international reputation as he continued to travel and exhibit globally.

Barceló made his first ceramic works in 1994 during a prolonged stay in Mali, working with the tradition of Dogon earthenware. That use of simple materials and traditional techniques captivated the artist and inspired an enduring fascination with clay, often at large scale, such as the 300 square meter relief sculpture at the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in Palma, Mallorca (2001-07) and related projects such as the 1,600 square meter domed ceiling for the United Nations conference hall in Geneva.

From October 2023 issue of Fujingaho.
Photo by Masatomo Moriyama.

Given Barceló's intense and prolific production of ceramics, an encounter with the rich traditions of Japanese pottery was a natural extension of his practice, and a post-pandemic meeting with the renowned Shigaraki potter Kazuya Furutani opened the door to Barceló's engagement with that 800-year-old ceramic tradition. Working together in the studio, Furutani and Barceló executed more than 40 hand-coiled vessels and flat panel works in which Furutani would provide traditional Shigaraki forms for Barceló to transform before the clay dried or became too brittle.

Barceló's primordial and organic images of the deep sea and earth, of arid deserts from Africa and the rocky landscape and underwater marine universe of the Balearic Islands, resonate with history, literature, poetry, myth, and music. His dramatic improvisations saw him twist protruding crabs out of the soft clay, incise insects deep into the surface, and set free springing fish; all were then subject to the unpredictable alchemical transformation of traditional Shigaraki firing, overseen by Furutani. That process was heavily influenced by the weather, as well as the placement of firewood, in the Anagama kiln built by the ceramicist himself. Over four days at temperatures of 1,300 degrees, under continual supervision by Furutani, the rich texture and colorings of Shigaraki ceramics organically emerged.

About the artist

Miquel Barceló was born in Felanitx, Majorca in 1957 and currently lives and works in Majorca and Paris. The youngest artist to show at the Musée du Louvre, Barceló represented Spain at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 and participated in Documenta 7 in Kassel, Germany in 1982.

He has had retrospectives at renowned institutions, including National Museum of Art, Osaka (2021, traveled to Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum; Mie Prefectural Art Museum; Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery); the Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2005); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2005); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2002); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1996), and his artwork is included in many esteemed public and private collections worldwide. Museum exhibitions dedicated to his ceramic works have been held at Fundació Catalunya-La Pedrera, Barcelona (2024); Museé d'Art moderne de Céret (2013); Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon (2013); Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (2000) among others.

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