



Press Release
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The International Symposium of Ceramics in Bechyně steps out of the circle. It will also present an artist who exhibited at the Venice Biennale

What is created outside of the circle? The answer to this question will be given by the 29th International Symposium of Ceramics in Bechyně, which this time is thematising ceramics as a material of contemporary art. This year, one of the oldest symposia in the world aims to explore media overlaps, stepping outside the established boundaries of the field while maintaining respect for the nature and specificity of the material. It welcomes six artists who look at the medium from a different perspective. Among them, the Italian participant in the Venice Biennale in 2017, Salvatore Arancio, and the Japanese artist, Nao Matsunaga, who combines ceramic clay with wood and painting in his work. The month of joint creation at the Secondary School of Arts and Crafts in Bechyně will start on 16 July and will culminate on 14 August with the presentation of the works of art made during the Symposium. For more information visit www.symposium-bechyne.com.

The International Symposium of Ceramics in Bechyně is exceptional in that it has been held without interruption ever since its foundation in 1966. The platform for regular meetings of artists from all corners of the world has given participants freedom to choose their themes and materials, giving rise to artistic experiments, sculptures and unique sculptural objects. *"Ceramic fine art had a prominent position and a number of advocates at the first Bechyně symposia,"* said Eva Pelechová, the director of the symposium, adding: *"This year, this idea is a central theme. Unlike abroad, in our environment, there has long been a lack of discussion about the position of ceramics on the art scene. As a result, there is a lack of appreciation of works by trained ceramists and minimum reflection on the use of ceramic material by so-called fine artists. This imaginary interspace is what we want to focus on this time,"* added Pelechová.

"All six artists involved have been working with ceramics for a long time, but at the same time, clay is not the only material they use in their work," says the curator, Kristýna Péčová, adding: *"Due to this year's thematic focus, a training in ceramics was not a criterion for the selection of participants. We were looking for artists who, in some way, transcend the traditional boundaries of art disciplines and who use ceramics within various contemporary artistic strategies."* The selection of the participants in the 29th symposium was made by a jury consisting of sinologist and art theorist Emma Hanzlíková, art historian Jan Mergl from the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Gabriel Vach, head of the ceramics studio at the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art in Pilsen, curator and artist Milan Mikuláščík,

last year's curator, Veronika Rollová, the current curator, Kristýna Péčová, and the director, Eva Pelechová.

Since its beginnings, the symposium has been held on the premises of the Secondary School of Arts and Crafts in Bechyně, where the leading Cubist sculptor Otto Gutfreund studied. In mid-July, the school will become a refuge for **Salvatore Arancio**, an Italian artist who, in addition to ceramics, also works with photography, collage and video and is interested in psychedelia, science, mythology and various natural and geological processes. Four years ago, he presented his work at the 57th Venice Biennale: an outdoor ceramic sculptural installation. It represented a mystical garden in which visitors were confronted with mysterious, totemic formations inspired by petrified trees created in Hawaii when lava poured into the local forests. Another participant, **Marco Chiandetti**, has been working with clay for more than 10 years. Material plays the key role in his creative process, even if the final work is eventually made of something else. *"For Chiandetti, what is essential is the movement or action that is imprinted on his work. In one of his famous projects, for example, he shot blocks of clay with a Kalashnikov, which was also his response to the gun culture in South Africa,"* Péčová added. The London-based Japanese artist **Nao Matsunaga** likes to combine ceramic clay with wood to create colourful abstract objects. He is interested in ceremonial and ritualistic objects and spaces. Three female artists are also represented in the symposium. The first of them is **Ivana Králíková**, who lives in Sweden and uses clay in her experimental and socially critical projects. In the Czech Republic, for example, she presented her installation depicting the menstrual cycle called Wandering Wombs which she exhibited at the Futura gallery. **Jimena Mendoza**, a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, comes from Mexico and combines references to iconography, literature, mythology, vision and ideas about the universe in her object-oriented work. The sixth participant is **Barbora Dayef**, a recent graduate of sculpture studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. In her performative works, clay appears mainly in its raw, unfired state, serving at times as a blanket for the performer, and at other times as a means of creating an ancient column with hand-carved fluting.

16 July – 14 August 2021

International Symposium of Ceramics Bechyně 1966-2021 | Outside the Circle

Location: Secondary School of Arts and Crafts in Bechyně, Aleš South Bohemian Gallery - International Museum of Ceramics, Bechyně

Curator of the Symposium: Kristýna Péčová

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