

**MADOLA**

*de l'aigua*



## MADOLA'S SYMBOLISM

Maria Angels Domingo, Madola, needs no introduction in the world of ceramics and art in general. For those who are not familiar with this area, we need only say that she is one of the most important Catalan artists of the 20 th. century.

In an age in which artists were seen as unusual people and little respected, it was even more difficult for a woman. As if this were not enough, committing herself to ceramics merely compounded her difficulties. However, Madola not only faced her challenges courageously, but gave herself new ones and found ways of overcoming them, and she has now been rewarded with well-deserved recognition and great prestige. Thus, the magnificent exhibition that the *Museu del Cantir d'Argentona* dedicates each year to renowned ceramic artists is fully justified on this occasion.

Madola was one of the foremost artists of the last quarter of the 20th century and now, at the beginning of the new millennium she is still leading the way with the most innovative of trends. When Madola started the ceramic studies programme in the *Escola Massana* and in the *Escola d'Arts i Oficis de la Diputació de Barcelona* in the 1970's, the world of ceramics was limited to the conventional form of vases modelled on potter's wheels and little more. As for materials, the most predominant was red clay, but Madola went for high temperature materials such as refractory clay, porcelain and high intensity coloured oxides. This was a time when a new artistic movement emerged, of which she is one of the greatest exponents, instigating change and opening the door to new trends. She broke the moulds of the traditional mannerist aesthetic, decorativism and functionalism, situating herself wholeheartedly within conceptualism.

If one had to place her work within the context of today's artistic trends, she would have to be situated in the post-modern period, right in the centre of conceptualism. Madola builds on new proposals for sculptural formalism, based on expressionism within the abstract. She rejects any kind of figurative image or conventional form, entering fully into structuralist representation that makes the hand-sculpting technique possible. At the same time, she knows how to draw out all the possibilities that a plastic material such as clay has to offer. In her hands, the clay reaches the farthest extremes of high temperature providing an immense personal language with an endless variety of finishes and nuances through textures, bumps, incisions and relief developed on the material, as well as pictorial qualities from surface strokes, with a discourse represented by symbols and graphics.

### Magical Symbolism

Although the huge size of the pieces and the overwhelmingly original forms are often surprising, even provocative, at first sight, due to the daring contrast of colour, she always manages to harmonise her work with strong pictorial strokes, achieving a broad diversity of tones and transparencies that break with the simplicity of geometric shapes. All these contrasts lead to a discourse not lacking in atavistic reminders created by the chromaticity of the colours. Her work as a whole gives an evocative feel of the Mediterranean.

Each of her works has a fascinating and seductive just look like the artist's own personality. In any case, we cannot completely understand unless we interpret the symbolism and spirituality contained and represented in these thought-provoking sculptures. They are sculptures that do not follow arbitrary forms but contain a double meaning. One example of this is the form and magical symbolism represented by them and which in turn represent each stage of the author's life - each mood and emotion with distinct forms, like the dolmens, steles, funerary urns or fountains and columns are linked to the essence and fundamental aspects of all human beings, as are life and death, as well as other elements of nature such as water and land.

The ten sculpture series now on show in the exhibition room at the *Museu del Cantir* belongs to the artist's most recent creative stage and the symbolic theme they represent is water; water as the source of life, water as the wealth of peoples, water as a scarce resource that must be preserved. For this reason, the sculptures are titled: *domus, brocal de l'aigua* (water's edge), *aigües dolces* (fresh water), *caneló escrit* (written gutter).

What better site for this exhibition dedicated to the magic symbolism of water than the area of Argentona, which contains many fountains and rivers. Its patron saint is Santo Domingo who for centuries has been the guardian of water. Its *Fiesta Mayor* (Town Festival) is based on the mythology of water. It also has an important museum dedicated to jugs. Now, through the work of Madola and this exhibition, we pay homage once again to the magical symbolism that unites art and water.

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