



# 1001 cups

Curated by Swiss ceramist and teacher **Claude Passet**  
1 - 31 December 2009 at the Crafts Museum, New Delhi

## the cup

The universal shape of the cup can be found in all cultures and civilisations. In India, a simple little earthenware cup, made from a lump of clay hardened by rudimentary firing, has been produced for centuries and in countless numbers. This humble vessel may soon disappear, however, as it is replaced by plastic-coated paper cups.

Once upon a time there was a teacup... Or rather: once upon a time there were 1001 tea cups, which means 1001 stories, as each cup not only contains tea, but also its own history, a culture, a landscape, a purpose, the imprint of the hands that shaped it... To hold one of these cups in one's palms, to contemplate it, is to be overwhelmed by the strength, the individuality contained in it, and to be taken by it on a marvellous journey. Here is a journey through a thousand and one incredible variations, which transforms this humble object at the confluence where the hands that shaped it join the ones that hold it.

### Océane Madelaine



### List of 100 ceramists who have contributed to the exhibition

Aarti Vir, India Aghate Larpent, France Akbar Rakhimov, Uzbekistan Akira Yagi, Japan Aline Favre, Switzerland Ann Roberts, Canada Anja Seiler - Kopmann, Switzerland Arnold Annen, Switzerland Aude Weber, Switzerland Bernard and Cécile Coronel-Guyot, France Carmela Iatropoulou, Greece Caroline Cheng, China Catherine Vanier, France Chloé Peytermann, Switzerland Cornelia Troesch, Switzerland Dalloun, France Daniel De Montmollin, France Daphne Corregan, France Denise Millet, Switzerland Eric Astoul, France Eva Haudum, France Evelyne Porret, Egypt Fayoum Students, Egypt Fayoum Ex-Students, Egypt François Fresnais, France François Ruegg, Switzerland Frère Lutz Krainhofer, France Goichi Uchida, Japan Guil-Young Jeong, Korea Gwyn Hanssen-Pigott, Australia Hilma Fernandez Romero, France Huihuang Jiang, China Hugues de Crousaz, Switzerland Imaemon, Japan Imaemon Imaizumi, Japan In-Su Lee, Korea Ira Chaudhuri, India Isabelle Amoudruz, Switzerland Isabelle Tanner, Switzerland Janet Mansfield, Australia Jayanti Naik, India Jean-Claude De Crousaz, Switzerland Jean Girel, France Joan Serra Carbones, Spain Jugal Kishore Sankhyan, India Johan Van Loon, Netherland Kaie Fu, China Kazuki Sato, Japan Kersti Biuw, Sweden Kristine Michael, India Laeticia Pineda, France Laxmi Narayan Prajapati, India Lea Georg, Switzerland Lekha Bhagat, India Léandre Burkhard, China Lise Cassani, France Marie-Blanche Nordmann, Switzerland Martine Aeschlimann, Switzerland Michel Pastore, Egypt Mieke Everaet, Belgium Ming Bai, China Mirella Cecconi, Italy Nany Champy-Schott, France Noemi Fauconnet, Switzerland Tadashi Nishihata, Japan Océane Madeleine, France Olga Kamienik, Switzerland Ouiza Bacha, France Pandurangiah Daroz, India Piero Isgro, Switzerland Ryoji Koie, Japan S Sheherezade Alam, Pakistan Saraben Kumbhar, India Sang-Wook Huh, Korea Se-Yong Lee, Korea Seung-Ho Yang, France Shampa Shah, India Shoko Koike, Japan Simone Perrotte, France Sueharu Fukami, Japan Sylvianne Luescher, France Taime Morino, Japan Theodora Chorafas, Greece Thérèse Lebrun, Belgium Tine Deweerdt, Belgium Toshihiro Munakata, Japan Tristan Chaillot, France Turquoise Mountain Foundation, Afghanistan Weijun Fan, Australia Wenzeng Chen, China Xinyuan Chen, China Yangze Jiang, China Yifeng Gao, China Yimin Fei, China Yogesh Mahida, India Yong-Ho Lee, Korea Yoshihiko Yoshida, Japan Yoshimi Futamura, France Zahra Bacha, Algeria Zhenhua Jin, China



## the exhibition concept

This itinerant exhibition is intended to pay tribute to a little teacup from India and aims to demonstrate the rich diversity that exists in present-day ceramics and thus share with the general public a wide variety of approaches to the use of ceramic materials. By inviting contemporary potters and ceramists from all continents to apply their creativity to a universal type of cup, we wish to offer a broad panorama of creative visions. Displaying examples of the most archaic to the most recent techniques the exhibition will present a variety of processes ranging from smoked, polished earthenware to gilded porcelain.

Traditionally, the skills of the craft were transmitted locally from master to pupil. Today, apart from some places where traditional production endures, ceramic skills and its related knowledge is mainly taught in applied art institutes, or in workshops and international symposiums.

## the film

A film, shot in India, China, Japan, France and Switzerland by Louk Vreeswijk on the theme of diversity in contemporary ceramic creation will be shown during the exhibition.

## the workshops

A series of workshops are being organised in Delhi and Bhopal. Traditional craftspeople and studio potters have been invited to participate in the workshop being conducted by Swiss ceramist and curator Claude Passet, Anja Seiler-Kopmann, Lise Cassani and Hugues de Crousaz.

1 – 4 December 2009 at and in collaboration with the Crafts Museum, New Delhi.

7 – 9 December 2009 at and in collaboration with the Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.

Work produced during the workshop will be on display from 15 December onwards.

## the exhibition tour

### INDIA

New Delhi, Crafts Museum  
1 to 31 December 2009

### CHINA

Guangzhou  
Guangdong Museum of Art  
5 March to 11 April 2010

### KOREA

Gyeonggi-do, Icheon World  
Ceramic Exposition Foundation  
1 June to 15 July 2010

### FRANCE

Biot, Musée de la Ville  
1 to 30 September 2010  
Paris, Viaduc des Arts  
October to November 2010  
Roubaix, Musée la Piscine  
December 2010 to February 2011

### SWITZERLAND

Geneva, Musée Ariana  
April to July 2011  
La Chaux-de-Fond, Musée des Beaux-arts  
September to November 2011

Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council initiates and presents projects that reflect the multicultural character of Switzerland and South Asia. It promotes artists seeking dialogue with other cultures in an effort to forge closer ties. Pro Helvetia New Delhi's aim is to coordinate Pro Helvetia's activities in the South Asia region. It supports artistic and cultural collaboration between this region and Switzerland, and also seeks to promote Swiss ideas and arts practice among local audiences.

[www.prohelvetia.in](http://www.prohelvetia.in)



dialogue  
céramique

Concept, realization by the team « dialogue céramique »

Académie Internationale  
de la céramique

UNESCO  
Commission suisse  
pour l'UNESCO Berne

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## a thousand and one teacups and as many stories

To give an idea of the multiple dimensions of ceramics in a wide variety of cultures, in its most traditional as well as its most experimental aspects, one typical object seemed to us to be the obvious choice because of its simplicity, its universal form and its essential function as a container: the cup. Studies on India and Japan show the wealth of its symbols and the wide variety of practices associated with it, from one-off use as a drinking vessel to veneration as a sacred link with tradition. « **1001 Cups** » particularly aims to pay homage to the most humble of all clay containers, the *kulhar* teacup - made in millions for centuries, fired at low temperatures, used only once and then discarded. The *kulhar* is a constant reminder of the origins of ceramics even while serving its function as a purely utilitarian object. Sadly, it is today in danger of being replaced by the industrially produced plastic cup.

However, this exhibition is not meant as a last tribute. While the present situation of the little Indian cup bears witness to the difficulties encountered by a significant proportion of traditional potters, the enthusiasm generated by this exhibition project, the richness and variety of the pieces sent in by the one hundred international artists and artisans who responded to the call of the Swiss ceramist and curator of this exhibition, Claude Passet, clearly demonstrate the vitality of contemporary creative ceramics. The formal constraints imposed on them - a series of ten cups approximately the same size as the *kulhar*; all different, but based on a single technique - in no way limited the participants' imagination and know-how. Such technical and formal constraints only bring out all the more clearly the variety of expressive and aesthetic possibilities of each artist's offering. Their original creations also show how permeable the boundaries between tradition and modernity, and between legacy and innovation are. In a globalised world, museums and communication technology abolish time and space and make the most diverse practices and traditions meet. Ceramists travel, visit one another, share knowledge and then reinvent it through their own cultural references.

And yet this movement which seems so new to us, so characteristic of our modernity is seen in a different light when put in the perspective of the history of ceramics: although the touring exhibition, « **1001 Cups** », with its packing-crate showcases using modern means of transport, simply follows the ancient Silk Routes which first carried Chinese porcelain to Europe, inspiring the emulation of local ceramists and the invention of new techniques. By presenting works of contemporary international artists, we hope that this modern-day caravan will bring with it curiosity and excitement to both ceramists and the general public alike, all of whom are invited to discover, close up, this sensuous play of form and matter and to share in its diversity and richness.

Gabriel Umstätter  
Lausanne



## 100 artists 100 techniques

Although this art-form has evolved in many directions, four basic trends can be named.



Each artist has created a series of ten cups, all different, but based on a single technique. The purpose of each series of ten cups will be to demonstrate the variety of shapes, textures, colours and ornamentations that one technique can offer.

## birth of the project

All of my life's work has been centred on a quest for diversity, and fate has given me abundant opportunities to discover it. Already while training as a ceramist in the workshop of a master potter, a creative artist, I was also learning to throw with the craftsman in the neighbouring workshop, which made varnished pottery. Around the same time, my godfather invited me to accompany him on his ethnographic surveys in Europe and India to collect traditional ceramic objects. I later continued this ethnographic work on my own initiative in France, Rajasthan (India), Japan, Kabylia (Algeria) and in Australia with the Aborigines. These travels and sojourns gave me the opportunity to experiment with new techniques and the knowledge of ceramic production (particularly wood firing in Japan).

The exhibition of these 1001 cups shows the great diversity that ceramics has to offer, seen through different eyes and fashioned by different hands, from Australia to Canada, from Europe to Asia by way of North Africa. I marvel at the variety of possibilities, attitudes and options of contemporary creation, from the humblest potter to the avant-gardes, who have chosen to go beyond the basic function of the cup, and even so far as to deny it.

This exhibition is the culmination of a long personal quest and, more than that, it is a journey in time and space, for the culture of ceramics is in constant movement. Many ceramists take their inspiration from Chinese or Middle-Eastern traditions, returning to the sources of rural and popular traditions, conducting their experiments in countries and cultures other than their own.

I express my heartfelt thanks to the one hundred ceramists who created these 1001 cups for having accepted my challenge of diversity, for having taken part in these journeys in clay and, furthermore, for having donated their work. Without their generosity, this exhibition would not have been possible.

Claude Passet  
Geneva