



**LEEDS  
ARTS RESEARCH  
CENTRE**

**CERÁMICA**

**AMANDA WANNER**

# OUTPUT INFORMATION

Title:  
Cerámica

Output Type:  
M – Exhibition

Venue:  
RIBA North, Liverpool

Year of first exhibition:  
2017

Authors:  
Amanda Wanner  
Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez

Research Groups:  
Autism Research Lab  
Curating Research



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

Cerámica combines digital engineering processes with traditional ceramic skills, focusing on environmental sustainability and interdisciplinary collaboration between designers, engineers, architects and ceramicists. This synergy between traditional and digital techniques challenges the received opposition between pre-industrial craft and modern technology: that the former is assumed to represent a local vernacular, the latter a global language of standardisation.

It comprises two elements. The first is a ceiling installation containing 200 cone lighting units made from slip-cast porcelain, designed to distribute daylight in interiors, minimizing requirements for artificial light and simulating changes in sunlight. The ceiling unit lights up uniformly as a continuous surface or as localized groupings of individual cones, depending on how it's programmed. The digital template used to generate the 3D prototype for the ceiling cones also forms the basis for 11 ceramicists to make handcrafted responses. These, though taking their cue from their functioning counterpart, push its application into a more vernacular realm, with references to social, ethical and environmental themes.

Cerámica was chosen by the RIBA as the inaugural exhibition in its new North Exhibition space in Liverpool, and sponsored by Tile of Spain, ICEX, University of Liverpool, Leeds Beckett University, Liverpool Hope University, Glyndwr University, myprint partners, the Arts Council of Wales, Most EIRO, Field Design, and LITE. Accompanying the exhibition was a series of events: curator's tours, artist's talks, and Clay Play, an opportunity for visitors to create their own tiles in a mirroring of the show's vernacular approach to design.

By combining handcrafted ceramics with digitally optimized design models, Cerámica posits the boundary between function and decoration, between design and art, as a porous one in which the social, ethical and environmental are seen, not as extrinsic themes superimposed on production methods, but as something intrinsic to those methods and their resultant forms.



“Cerámica at RIBA North not only offers a view of how new production processes, design technology and more considered collaborative endeavors could bring about a more sustainable future using ceramics, it also speaks of how artists and designers are working to test the limits of the material, making it relevant to the digital age while also celebrating its rich history.”

Liam Peacock, *The Double Negative*



“Cerámica, a ground-breaking new exhibition at RIBA North supported by Tile of Spain / ASCER, explores the future use of ceramics and technology in architecture. ... And as the creative minds of industry and academia work together to bridge disciplines, it is an exciting and positive result that the outcomes of this exhibition will inform the development of viable architectural products.”

**Isabelle Lomholt, e-architect**



*Ceramica* Installation shot 2017

[Image courtesy of ECA Lab]



*Ceramica* Installation shot 2017

[Image courtesy of ECA Lab]



“Ceilings, facades and walls may seem rather banal,..., but this exhibition showcases how we could inject beautiful, hand-crafted products into our buildings and spaces.”

**Suzy Jones, Director of RIBA North**





“Ceramic has a bright future as a high-performance construction material, respectful with the environment and a great aesthetic for architecture and design.”

**Rosa Urbano, Collaborator, ECA Lab**

“Design for sustainability demands a new outlook. We are at the beginning of a new era, one limited only by the human imagination. The Cerámica exhibition offers an inspiring vision of this potential future.”

**Stuart Walker, Professor of Design for Sustainability, Lancaster University**

# APPENDIX



ECA Lab & RIBA North,  
*Cerámica*, [Exhibition  
 Handout] October 2017



Image courtesy of ECAlab

## Cerámica

October 2017 - January 2018  
 Free entry. Everyone welcome

It is widely recognised that the decoration of objects and spaces, and the development of complex technologies defines our species. Our combined dexterity, creativity and ability to cooperate has enabled us to manipulate our environment and connect with each other on a global scale. Pre-industrial making techniques and the proliferation of technology are often seen as opposing forces, one favouring the local – the development of vernacular language and context; the other favouring global processes – optimisation and standardisation.

In this exhibition we see how traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes can be used together to produce more meaningful and sustainable architectural elements. A selection of national and international ceramicists were asked to further develop optimised building screens, created using digital environmental and fabrication technology. Through their input, the resulting ceramic ceilings and walls host individual vernacular languages, support heritage and local identity, and transform the preliminary engineered product into a

more socially, ethically and environmentally sustainable building component.

The exhibition features full-scale prototypes of light-diffusing facades and ceilings, accompanied by a film explaining the experimental design methodologies explored through the ECAlab. The exhibition will be supported by the Moulding Futures Symposium, to discuss prospective scenarios for ceramics within architecture.

ECAlab (Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory) explores the possibilities of ceramics for sustainable technologies, while examining the role of emerging digital technologies alongside traditional ceramic craftsmanship skills. It brings together a number of academic institutions with leading professionals, designers, engineers, architects and ceramicists to realise projects with an environmentally sustainable focus. Ultimately its aim is to develop new applications for ceramics within an architectural context and introduce emerging designers with new ways of thinking about this material.

With thanks to the exhibition sponsors:  
 ASCER | ICEX | The Spanish Office for Foreign Trade | Liverpool Hope University |  
 Glyndwr University | Arts Council Wales | Quinta de Mosteiro



# REVIEWS & PRESS

Castellón Information, 'The Ascer Ceramic Chair in Liverpool organizes the 'Ceramics' exhibition', Castellón Information, 26 October 2017.

<http://www.castelloninformacion.com/la-catedra-ceramica-ascer-en-liverpool-organiza-la-exposicion-ceramica-que-estara-abierta-hasta-el-10-de-febrero/>

Stephen Cousins, 'Bright idea for building', RIBA Journal, 27 October 2017.

<https://www.ribaj.com/products/supa-ceramic-products-stephen-cousins-riba-north-ceramica>

Isabelle Lomholt, 'Tile of Spain Cerámica at RIBA North', e-architect, 21 October 2017.

<https://www.e-architect.co.uk/awards/tile-of-spain-ceramica-at-riba-north>

Icon, 'RIBA North's Cerámica explores the future of ceramics', Icon, 20 October 2017.

<https://www.iconeye.com/design/features/item/12850-riba-norths-ceramica-explores-the-future-of-ceramics>

Liam Peacock, "'The design object should also be a piece of art": Architecture Meets Ceramics At RIBA North', The Double Negative, 22 November 2017.

<http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2017/11/the-design-object-should-also-be-a-piece-of-art-architecture-meets-ceramics-at-riba-north/>

Castellón Information, 'The Ascer Ceramic Chair in Liverpool organizes the 'Ceramics' exhibition', *Castellón Information*, 26 October 2017.

<http://www.castelloninformacion.com/la-catedra-ceramica-ascer-en-liverpool-organiza-la-exposicion-ceramica-que-estara-abierta-hasta-el-10-de-febrero/>

"The exhibition gathers the experimental works of ECAlab for sustainable architecture and hosts workshops and conferences.

As part of the collaboration that ASCER has underway at the Liverpool School of Architecture, the exhibition ' CERAMICS' has been organized in collaboration with RIBA North. The ASCER Ceramic Chair in Liverpool (integrated in ECAlab, Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory) thus shows its work focused on exploring the future use of ceramics and technology in architecture.

This exhibition has the support of Tile of Spain-ASCER together with the University of Liverpool, Leeds Beckett University and the London ICEX Commercial Office within the framework of the 2017 Sector Promotion Plan in the United Kingdom.

The exhibition, which can be visited from Saturday, October 28, seeks to highlight how traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes can be used together to produce more significant and sustainable architectural elements. Large-scale prototypes of light-diffusing facades and ceilings are included in the exhibition.

"Ceramic has a bright future as a high-performance construction material, respectful with the environment and a great aesthetic for architecture and design", concludes Rosa Urbano (curator of the exhibition). Numerous students, universities, industry partners and internationally respected potters participate in the research project launched 6 years ago, with the support of ASCER. The results of his experimental and dynamic research will be exhibited at RIBA North, RIBA's new national architecture center on the Liverpool coastline.

A film explaining the experimental design methodologies explored at ECAlab will also be screened and will feature a talk and a guided tour of the exhibition at its opening by its founder Dr. Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez. (see trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=h9iqzwYiK94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=h9iqzwYiK94))

The exhibition is accompanied by various ceramic workshops open to the general public. The highlight is a symposium on architecture and ceramics that will be accompanied by an exhibition of pieces by companies from Tile of Spain that aims to be a representation of the advances in innovation and design that are taking place in the Spanish sector. Under the title "Molding Futures: Architectural Ceramics Symposium" the symposium will include speakers, among others, Martin Bechthold (director of the collaboration of the Chairs Network at the Harvard GSD); Alexis Harrison (ARUP Engineers); Eric Parry (architect) and the studio Amanda Levete. It will be held on December 8 at RIBA North.

### **About the ASCER Ceramic Chairs Network**

ASCER has been running since 2004 an innovative Network of Ceramic Chairs in different Schools of Architecture (Harvard, Liverpool, Graz, Darmstadt, Barcelona, Alicante, Valencia and Madrid), through which they are organized - apart from the academic year itself - conferences, visits, exhibitions and the publication of publications related to the knowledge and diversification of the use of ceramics in the field of Architecture.

Castellón Information, 'The Ascer Ceramic Chair in Liverpool organizes the 'Ceramics' exhibition', *Castellón Information*, 26 October 2017.

<http://www.castelloninformacion.com/la-catedra-ceramica-ascer-en-liverpool-organiza-la-exposicion-ceramica-que-estara-abierta-hasta-el-10-de-febrero/>

Each Chair develops its work from its own approach, focusing on different characteristics of the material and on various solutions within the architecture. All share the objective of disseminating the knowledge and use of ceramic coatings in the field of architecture, both at the student, teaching and professional architect levels.

To this end, interesting technical conferences and visits are scheduled, projects of various kinds are developed and contests and colloquia are organized in which not only the students are enthusiastic.

In 2011 the collaboration with the University of Liverpool (United Kingdom) was started through the project 'Illuminating Through Ceramics'. After 6 years of work, the ECAlab (Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory) is born, within which a series of research programs have been developed that seek to explore the possibilities of ceramics for sustainability, while examining the role of technologies Emerging digital along with traditional ceramic skills. ECAlab has been founded and is directed by Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez and Amanda Wanner, and is part of the ASCER Network of Ceramic Chairs, which includes departments in various architecture schools. Furthermore, ECAlab has developed its own collaboration process in the UK,

Spanish tile manufacturers have played an important role in exploring the future sustainability of ceramics and their technical performance, which is why ECAlab's research works have been presented annually within the space dedicated to the Ceramic Chairs Network of ASCER in TransHitos (CEVISAMA).

You can access all the information about the Ceramic Chairs on their official site:

<http://www.catedraceramica.es>

### About RIBA North

RIBA North is a new center of national architecture and cultural destination on the coast in Liverpool designed by Matt Brook of Broadway Malyan, who won a RIBA North West award in 2015. At the heart of the center is the City Gallery, a space for Visitors learn more about Liverpool's present, past and future, as well as processes related to urban development and the evolution of the built environment. In addition to showcasing RIBA's historical collections - a rich collection of drawings, photographs and prints dating from the late 15th century to the present day - RIBA North is hosting a bold program of temporary exhibitions and "Ceramics" is its second exhibition."

[www.architecture.com/ribanorth](http://www.architecture.com/ribanorth)



Stephen Cousins, 'Bright idea for building', *RIBA Journal*, 27 October 2017

<https://www.ribaj.com/products/supa-ceramic-products-stephen-cousins-riba-north-ceramica>

"A new type of porcelain, strong and translucent, could transform architectural facades.

Artworks made from a new type of porcelain, that is both strong and super-translucent, will go on show at RIBA North's Cerámica exhibition in Liverpool, from this weekend.

The eight cone-shaped objects were produced by Budapest-based artist Edit Szabo, using a combination of clay and thin glass fibres.

Kiln firing at high temperatures strengthened the material compared to conventional porcelain, even at a thickness of just 1-2mm, and made it glow brightly when illuminated from behind.

The material offers great architectural potential, says Amanda Wanner, a curator of the exhibition and co-director of the Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory (ECAlab): 'If the goal is to create a very strong material, then the glass fibres could act as a form of reinforcement mesh. Porcelain is known for being translucent, but the inclusion of the glass creates a very powerful optical effect, if applied externally it could really make you question the nature of an architectural facade. Ceramic tiles or faience tend to appear heavy and solid, but this material produces a different effect.'

Szabo was one of eleven ceramicists invited by Cerámica to interpret an engineered architectural ceramic component, a light diffusing sinuous cone, using their individual approaches to ceramic making.

Her previous work in ceramics has focused on acoustic treatments, such as the development of ceramic acoustic

walls installed in Budapest. For Cerámica she went back to the drawing board to try to imbue the material with translucence and the ability to radiate light.

Some of Szabo's artworks feature small fragments of glass fibre mixed into clay, others feature entire glass threads wrapped around the surface of the cone in the glaze.

Mixing glass and ceramics has proved problematic in the past because glass melts at a different temperature to clay causing unpredictable results in the kiln. Rosa Urbano Gutierrez, co- director of ECAlab told RIBAJ: 'We assumed that the moment the glass cone went into the kiln it would melt; the geometry and therefore the internal transmission of light would be lost. But that didn't happen here – when the material was fired it became stronger.'

The material is also simple to mould and manipulate, adds Wanner: 'Porcelain is a very temperamental material that fractures and dries out quickly before it goes into the kiln. Szabo's additions enabled her to work it much better in its raw state.'

Cerámica will showcase the experimental design methodologies employed by ECAlab, a group of designers, engineers, architects and ceramicists set up to exploit traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes and create new applications for ceramics in architecture."

Icon, 'RIBA North's Cerámica explores the future of ceramics', Icon, 20 October 2017.

<https://www.iconeye.com/design/features/item/12850-riba-norths-ceramica-explores-the-future-of-ceramics>

"Cerámica, an innovative new exhibition at RIBA North supported by Tile of Spain / ASCER, explores the use of ceramics and technology in architecture. From 28 October 2017 to 10 February 2018, a series of full-scale installations will challenge preconceptions of the place of ceramics in the design and build process, including a light-diffusing ceiling of 200 cones by ECAlab (seen above).

Ceramics have a bright future as a high-performance, environmentally friendly and beautiful building material, say ECAlab (Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory) and their collaborators at ASCER (The Spanish Ceramic Tile Manufacturers' Association). The results of their six-year research project involving numerous students, universities, industry partners and internationally respected ceramicists are on show at RIBA North's new national architecture centre (seen below) on Liverpool's waterfront.

The exhibition will highlight how traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes can be used together to produce more meaningful and sustainable architectural elements. Using new technologies, British and international ceramicists have created a series of ceramic ceilings and walls that reflect different vernaculars and local heritage.

'Ceilings, facades and walls may seem rather banal,' says Director of RIBA North, Suzy Jones, 'but this exhibition showcases how we could inject beautiful, hand-crafted products into our buildings and spaces.'

'Cerámica is about the collaborative process to date, but it is also so much more than this,' say Dr Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez

and Amanda Wanner, founders of ECAlab and Senior Lecturers in Architecture at Liverpool University and Leeds Beckett University respectively. 'The Cerámica exhibition with RIBA North is a starting point for us,' explains Gutiérrez, 'and we are using it as a tool to generate new directions and new discussions.'

These new conversations will begin with a series of curator talks, starting on 28th October, and develop further at artists' workshops (18 Nov and 13 Jan) and a seminar, Moulding Futures: Architectural Ceramics Symposium (8 Dec) which are all being held throughout the duration of the exhibition, drawing visitors much closer into the process of how the ceramicist creates."

Isabelle Lomholt, 'Tile of Spain Cerámica at RIBA North', *e-architect*, 21 October 2017.

<https://www.e-architect.co.uk/awards/tile-of-spain-ceramica-at-riba-north>

"ECAlab inspires ceramicists to look to the future at RIBA North's Cerámica

### Cerámica Exhibition at RIBA North

Cerámica, a ground-breaking new exhibition at RIBA North supported by Tile of Spain / ASCER, explores the future use of ceramics and technology in architecture. From 28 October 2017, a series of full-scale installations by ECAlab will enliven RIBA's new centre on the Liverpool waterfront.

Ceramics have a bright future as a high-performance, environmentally friendly and beautiful building material for architecture and design – a conclusion that ECAlab (Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory) and their collaborators at ASCER (The Spanish Ceramic Tile Manufacturers' Association) have innovatively demonstrated in a 6-year research project involving numerous students, universities, industry partners and internationally respected ceramicists. The results of their experimental and dynamic research will be on show at RIBA North, the RIBA's new national architecture centre on the Liverpool waterfront, which will highlight the future use of ceramics and technology in architecture.

From 28 October 2017 to 10 February 2018, Cerámica will highlight how traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes can be used together to produce more meaningful and sustainable architectural elements. Using new technologies, British and international ceramicists have created a series of ceramic ceilings and walls that show different vernacular languages, reflecting local heritage. Highlights of the exhibition include full-scale prototypes of light-diffusing facades and ceilings.

'Ceilings, facades and walls may seem rather banal,' says Director of RIBA North, Suzy Jones, 'but this exhibition showcases how we could inject beautiful, hand-crafted products into our buildings and spaces.' Yet it is not just a display of what has been achieved in the collaborative process to date believes Dr Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez and Amanda Wanner, founders of ECAlab and Senior Lecturers in Architecture at Liverpool University and Leeds Beckett University respectively. 'The Cerámica exhibition with RIBA North is a starting point for us,' explains Gutiérrez, 'and we are using it as a tool to generate new directions and new discussions.'

The exhibition is supported by Tile of Spain-ASCER along with Liverpool University and Leeds Beckett University. And as the creative minds of industry and academia work together to bridge disciplines, it is an exciting and positive result that the outcomes of this exhibition will inform the development of viable architectural products. Spanish tile manufacturers have played an important role in exploring the future sustainability of ceramics and their technical performance and so ECAlab's research has often been presented at their annual industry tile fair.

As well as some very diverse creative input by some well known ceramic artists, the RIBA North exhibition will also be accompanied by a film explaining the experimental design methodologies explored at the ECAlab and is opened to the public on 28th October with a tour/talk by ECAlab's founder Dr Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez.

Isabelle Lomholt, 'Tile of Spain Cerámica at RIBA North', *e-architect*, 21 October 2017.

<https://www.e-architect.co.uk/awards/tile-of-spain-ceramica-at-riba-north>

As part of the ongoing discussion around Cerámica, a number of artists' workshops and a seminar Moulding Futures Symposium, will contribute further to the debate on the future for ceramics within architecture. And as Professor Stuart Walker, professor of design for sustainability, says: 'Design for sustainability demands a new outlook. We are at the beginning of a new era, one limited only by the human imagination. The Cerámica exhibition offers an inspiring vision of this potential future.'

Liam Peacock, “The design object should also be a piece of art”: Architecture Meets Ceramics At RIBA North, The Double Negative, 22 November 2017.

<http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2017/11/the-design-object-should-also-be-a-piece-of-art-architecture-meets-ceramics-at-riba-north/>

“Liam Peacock speaks to two of the designers testing the limits of pottery, porcelain and glass in RIBA North’s new exhibition Cerámica – and discovers how their cutting-edge production techniques could bring about a more sustainable future...

RIBA North, Liverpool’s new architectural centre, has just unveiled its second exhibition, entitled Cerámica. For those unfamiliar with RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), it is one of the most, if not the most, influential architectural institutions in the world: established in 1834, it has championed the most renowned architects in recent history, from Lasdun, who designed the Royal National Theatre on London’s South Bank, to Zaha Hadid, who created the MAXXI in Rome. Its awards and prizes define an architect’s career, and the architectural schools it accredits are among the most prestigious. All things considered, its presence as a public-facing exhibition space in Liverpool is of great importance.

As the first major investment outside of its London headquarters at 66 Portland Place, RIBA North is the institute’s most significant act of decentralizing its resources. Positioned on the Liverpool Waterfront, its neighbors are other important cultural institutions, such as Tate Liverpool and Open Eye Gallery, as well as sites of architectural importance, including the Three Graces, Albert Dock and the Liverpool One development. It is its positioning in this location and specifically within the Mann Island complex that put it at the center of the UNESCO World Heritage Site debate. Acting as the WHS hub, RIBA North provides information about the cultural and architectural heritage of Liverpool as well as hosting talks and lectures around the subject.

The recent increased focus on the World Heritage Site status follows warnings from UNESCO that further development on particular sites risks the status being revoked. The debate has raised several questions – including, is such growth on a global scale sustainable? At a time when continual development, consumption and growth have become a marker for success, can design offer viable alternatives?

Cerámica seeks to do just that; exploring the potential of ceramics as a sustainable alternative to more commonly used materials in architecture and design. The exhibition presents the research of ECLab (Environmental Ceramics for Architecture Laboratory), founded and directed by Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez and Amanda Wanner, and features the work of international and contemporary sculptors and designers, including Edit Szabo and Matt Davis. ECLab experiments with how traditional ceramic techniques and digital engineering processes can be used together to create more sustainable processes, objects and architectural elements.

As a material, the use of ceramics has transcended millennia, and its artifacts have offered insight into the lives of long extinct peoples. The oldest known ceramic artifact, the Venus of Dolni, was discovered alongside functional objects of that period, such as tools and vessels. This ceramic discovery pays testament to the human compulsion to render the world in three dimensions; not only for necessity, but also for the expression of ideas and beliefs. It is this link between clay, ceramics and human creativity that has driven the development of new processes and technologies over the ages. From hand building to throwing, slip casting to 3D printing, the incredible versatility of the material has meant it has always had a key place in the arts.

Liam Peacock, “The design object should also be a piece of art”: Architecture Meets Ceramics At RIBA North’, The Double Negative, 22 November 2017.

<http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2017/11/the-design-object-should-also-be-a-piece-of-art-architecture-meets-ceramics-at-riba-north/>

For Cerámica, ECAlab have worked with 11 ceramicists and asked them to reinterpret the light diffusing form that they’ve designed using digital software. The aim is to experiment with introducing an external input into the manufacturing process of an engineered object, allowing space for ‘local’ identity to be retained in a way that globalized markets and processes haven’t yet provisioned for.

“Sustainability for me is to create eternal pieces, not something that will be replaced in a few years”, exhibiting sculptor Szabo tells me (her work pictured, below) . “The key is the object’s personal significance and profound meaning. Spaces and objects are designed together thus the latter becomes an integral element of it’s environment. This way it becomes essential, not easily replaceable.”

It is this essentiality that has arguably been lost in a lot of the designed objects that we own today. Be it clothing, furniture, ornaments, appliances or handheld devices, they’re ultimately made to be mass producible, and to soon be obsolete or superseded. The impact of built-in obsolescence in contributing to our non-sustainable practices is reinforced by trends in the consumer and design worlds. “I find it important to embed my objects into a historical context”, continues Szabo, “that will ensure that they will preserve their aesthetics and concept in the long term. This is the reason why I don’t follow trends. Of course in many cases this makes it difficult to engage my work in the flow of the design field.”

The natural abundance of clay made it available to artists and craftspeople across the ages and all over the world. This led to great diversity in objects and tools produced at a local-scale with longevity in mind and decoration that reflected to the specific identity of people and places. The historic use of clay in the production of everyday functional objects somewhat excluded it from the more accepted toolkit of the modern artist, and designated it as the medium of craft. However, the dissolving boundaries between contemporary craft, fine art and design have led to a resurgence in the use of ceramics. The preconceived notions of strict borders between fields is something that Szabo likes to play with, asking the viewer to question the relationship between form, function and concept. “This confusion disturbs the cognitive process when a category is applied to the object,” she says.

At Cerámica, you’ll be aware of the dual agency of the objects on display; in particular, Szabo’s work reflects a practice that includes furniture, sculpture, architectural components and conceptual objects. “For me, these categories do not have exact limits”, she states. “The design object should also be a piece of art. An object is good when it has many layers.” Szabo often uses traits borrowed from art and design history to create these layers, employing styles from Baroque to Minimalism.

For her sculpture in the exhibition the same is true, combining fiberglass with ceramics to create what she calls “a contemporary paraphrase of the Chinese rice grain technique”, whereby translucent glaze fills holes in the porcelain allowing light to pass through revealing detailed patterns.

Liam Peacock, “The design object should also be a piece of art”: Architecture Meets Ceramics At RIBA North, The Double Negative, 22 November 2017.

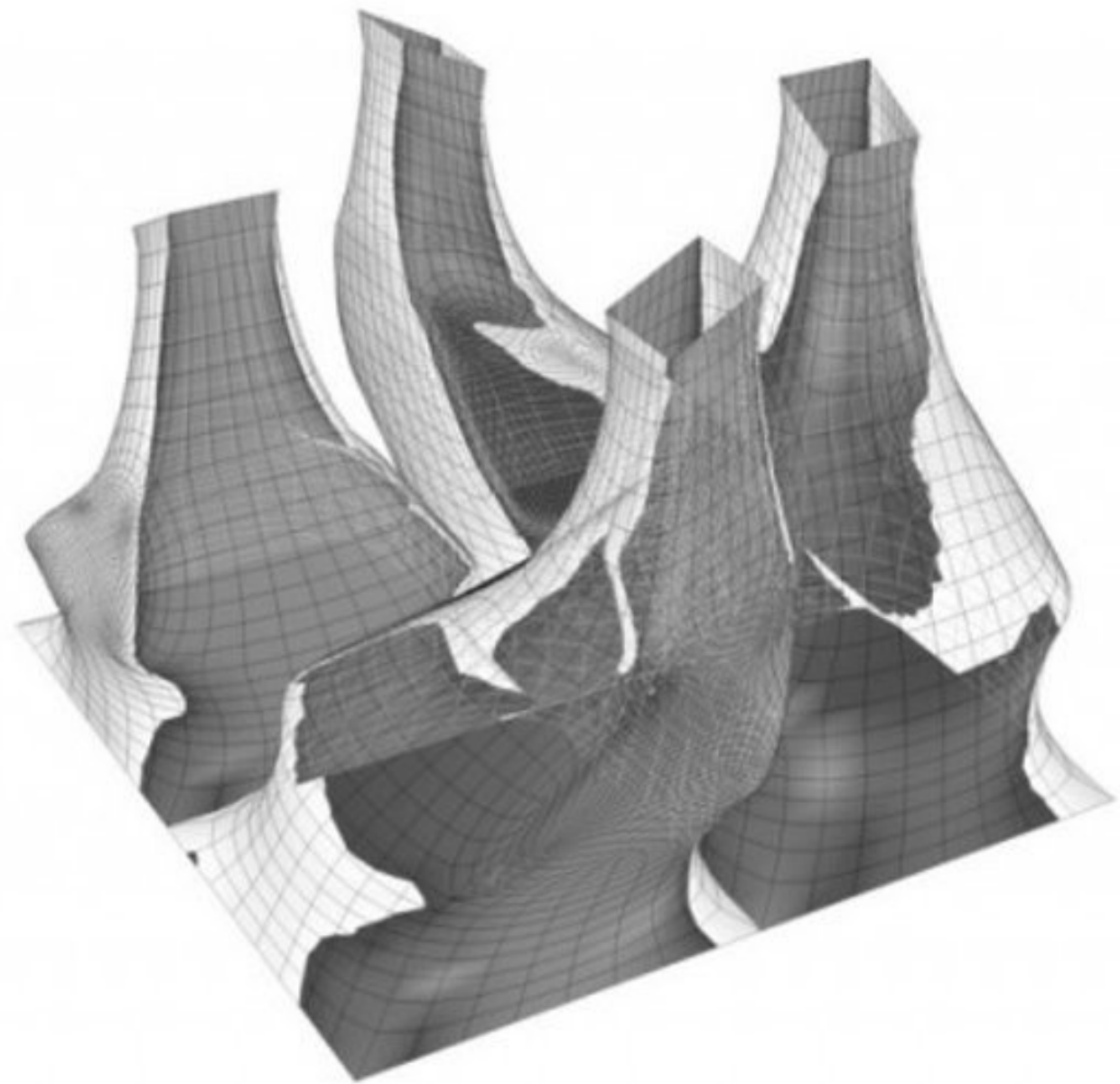
<http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2017/11/the-design-object-should-also-be-a-piece-of-art-architecture-meets-ceramics-at-riba-north/>

As well as broadening possibilities in the field of sustainability, developments in technology have also allowed for the re-interpretation of traditional techniques and forms. Exhibiting ceramist Davis (pictured, above) combines 3D printing with casting in bone china to create pieces that would have previously been unable to achieve with traditional techniques. His vessels and sculptures mimic forms from antiquity but are produced with an intentionally pixelated surface.

“The forms are only made possible by using modern tools and technology; this is how I machine physical objects that visually allude to their digital origins”, Davis elaborates. “My training as a graphic designer opened up the possibilities of 3D printing and incorporating digital design into a millennia old art form.” This combination of cutting edge processes and traditional techniques opens up new potential for the medium and positions it within a contemporary discourse, one being shaped by the development of technology and its effect on our lives.

Davis argues that “analogue techniques of working with clay are now nearly exhausted, and there is very little we’ve not seen already” – which begs the question: What is next for the medium? He adds “parallel this idea with that of intangible code and how, alongside technology, we’ve evolved to recognise this aesthetic in a physical form.” The physical manifestation of the digital world has become an area for new aesthetics and possibilities to be created for artists and designers working in a variety of mediums, and will arguably be the future for ceramics.

Cerámica at RIBA North not only offers a view of how new production processes, design technology and more considered collaborative endeavors could bring about a more sustainable future using ceramics, it also speaks of how artists and designers are working to test the limits of the material, making it relevant to the digital age while also celebrating its rich history.





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28 October 2017 – 10 February 2018

Cerámica Exhibition at RIBA North, Liverpool

Funding:

ASCER

RIBA

Tile of Spain

Links:

<https://www.ecalab.org>

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