

See the World VERSUS – Dare to See It All!

We challenge you to experience the world backwards. An invitation that furthermore has something significant to say about the artistic drive which motivates the VERSUS group and their conceptual form of expression, which pushes the boundaries of ceramics. VERSUS is composed of five progressive ceramicists, Ane Fabricius Christiansen, Camille Rishøj Nielsen, Lea Mi Engholm, Mariko Wada, and Sissel Wathne, who since 2007 have made a mark thanks to a series of remarkable exhibitions. In 2010 with *Nature Morte – Ceramics as Image*, which took genres as its theme, in 2012 with the process-oriented exhibition *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, in 2014 with *she*, an installation which debated gender issues, and most recently with the current exhibition *TALISMAN – Magic Objects* at CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark, which is the group's grandest statement so far.

Taking ceramic handicraft and ceramic techniques as their starting point, VERSUS constantly challenge the mental habits and traditional genres of ceramics. For VERSUS, ceramics is far from just a matter of technique, form, and function, but of exploring the character of clay with the senses, and of seeking the limits of ceramics thematically and conceptually. This occurs in the field between material, scenography, and form, though never understood as a static form of expression, since the viewer is always activated as a co-creator of meaning in their works.

With the exhibition *TALISMAN – Magic Objects* the group marks its 10th anniversary. Faced with this installation we are, like Alice in Wonderland, led into a world full of mystery and magic. To a subtle world of strange objects, which are simultaneously experienced as physically present and metaphysically dreamy. Along the path that snakes through the darkened rooms, our gaze is caught by the lighted, almost magical objects, which poetically throw their shadows along the walls. They are ceramic objects which in form and technique vary greatly, and which at one and the same time awaken associations and seem exotically unfamiliar.

Dark Secrets, Dreamcatcher, Tree of Life, Embrace Your Inner Demon, Transformation, Empathy, Dare to See It All, and Courage. These are the titles of some of the works in the installation, which like leitmotifs — together with the composition of the objects — encourage the viewer to find meaning through contemplation and reflection. A meaning which isn't given, but depends, precisely, upon the one who looks.

The ceramic objects in the space possess the power of the talisman. They each possess some magical qualities which go beyond physical reality; in other words some supernatural forces — both good and evil. In this sense the talismanic object bridges what we can and can't see with the naked eye. Between the physical and the spiritual world, between logic and belief and superstition, between the conscious and the unconscious. The concept of the talisman is itself a phenomenon known in many

cultures, and is generally seen as an expansion of human sight. As an object that allows for greater insight into oneself and new understanding, but only as long as we dare to let go of reason and believe in the talisman's special magic.

VERSUS invite us on a journey along this snaking road of sensual, subtle ceramic objects. A journey from the physical to the metaphysical, from the external to the internal, from reason to emotion. To a world full of aesthetics, poetry, mystery and magic, that brings a discourse about belief and superstition into our modern, rational world. A world much larger than the one we are immediately able to comprehend, and which forms the basis for new understanding. The recipe for the release of magic is 'to see the world VERSUS' and 'to dare to see it all'.

Pia Wirnfeldt,
Director – CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark