

# 47th Congress of the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC/AIC)

*"Ceramics in Architecture and Public Space"*  
*Barcelona: 12 – 16 September 2016*



photos - Monika Gass

Evelyne Schoenmann

Barcelona, capital of Catalonia in the northeastern corner of the Iberian Peninsula, was the venue for the 47th Congress of the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC/AIC). The theme was "Ceramics in Architecture and Public Space" and could not have been chosen better for the continually evolving city of Barcelona, where you can find art in or on buildings at every turn. The Congress takes place every two years. After the cooler weather in Ireland for the General Assembly in 2014, the heat and the nonstop sunshine in Barcelona were the climatic antithesis. Since Spain joined the EU in 1986 and the Olympic Games took place in

1996, Barcelona has been changing at a tremendous pace.

Public transport is excellent. The numerous hotels, apartments and B&B make it easier to organise a congress. Nevertheless, coordinating such an event is like a major construction site. Oriol Calvo and his team have earned a huge vote of thanks for their work! This year's IAC/AIC Congress from 12 – 16 September took place mainly in the Museu del Disseny and was divided into talks in the auditorium in the mornings and afternoon bus trips that merged into the evening events.

Let us take a closer look at the programme: on Monday after the attendees had registered and greeted each other in person, the opening ceremony of the Congress took place; various dignitaries, the director of the Museu del Disseny, the current president of the AIC/IAC Jacques Kaufmann and other participants in the project took the stage. The first specialist talk came from two architects from the AL\_A studio, in dialogue with ceramist Toni Cumella, who is well known in Catalonia.

After lunch, the participants took their seats in six buses leaving for a guided tour of the architectural sights of the



above - View of Barcelona from Park Güell  
 left - Opening ceremony  
 opposite - The former hospital Sant Pau









left top to bottom - work by:  
 - in the foreground - Cheryl Lucas  
 - Barbrø Aberg  
 - Meran Esson  
 - Werner Nowka



city. In the evening, all the participants were taken to the former Sant Pau hospital, now the Sant Pau Recinte Modernista. In one of the magnificent halls, the exhibition Ceramic Perspectives with exhibitors from Australia, New Zealand, Slovenia and Israel was opened. Afterwards, the new members of the IAC/AIC were welcomed by name in the large square outside the former hospital buildings. From Tuesday to Thursday, there were talks in the mornings again, panels and discussions, and in the afternoons, bus tours were organised to architectural highlights, including the Palau de la Musica with its concert hall (designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner, one of the leading representatives of Modernisme); the first covered market in Barcelona, Mercat S. Caterina, with its wave-shaped colourful ceramic roof by Cumella; Gaudí's Casa Milà (also known as La Pedrera); Park Güell, whose builder, also Gaudí, had paid particular attention to an environmentally appropriate approach. Then there was the La Llotja school of ceramics with an exhibition of Catalan artists, the former mill, La Farinera del Clot with the El Vendrell Biennial prizewinner in the exhibition, the Fundació Joan Miró, the Picasso Museum and many other interesting sites.



We spent one evening at the Casa Milà, where Patrick Gallaud (NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee Vice-President) gave a talk in the auditorium about UNESCO, followed by a round table discussion. On another evening, we went to the CaixaForum, formerly the Casaramona factory, to attend an event to thank the partners and sponsors as well as the countless enthusiastic volunteer helpers and to award the title of IAC/AIC Member of Honour to the well-known Catalan ceramist Toni Cumella. The Thursday evening was taken up by the opening of the exhibition Brick-by-Brick, followed by a party at the Roca Barcelona Gallery. With its stylish ceramics, Roca is world market leader in sanitary ware.



The whole of Friday was reserved for bus tours with route 1 taking members to the ceramics town of Bisbal and its many potteries, the terracotta museum and its famous school of ceramics. In the large park belonging to the school countless tables had been lovingly set for our lunch; the locals had prepared a huge pan of paella for us. In the afternoon, a visit to the exhibition Cerámica Negra in Quart was on the programme. The exhibition had been preceded by a symposium where international participants had made sculptures with the local clay, which they had then black-fired in the special kiln of the museum, La Terissa de Quart.

This is what ceramist Karin Putsch Grassi had to say about the second bus tour:

“Our first destination was Esplugues and selected works from the ceramics biennale at the Museu Can Tituró, where we saw the permanent exhibition tracing the development of tile production from the Middle Ages up to the early industrial era, also including the Salvador Miquel collection. The decor is plain and simple, but when they are laid out together, they form an amazing design. We also visited the La Rjoleta ceramics museum, a former ceramics factory where, in the heyday of Modernisme, ceramic architectural elements were made, some for Gaudí himself.

“After a delicious Catalan lunch, we visited the inner courtyard of the Sant Cugat monastery (9th century) and saw the impressive exhibition there in connection with the seminar Ceramics, Art and Life, contemporary ceramics from national and international artists in a place of calm and contemplation.”

Later that afternoon, all the participants gathered in Mataró in the square outside the Nau de Gaudí building, the first building of the Catalan architect and expert for Catalan Modernisme, Antoni Gaudí i Cornet. The building used to be a cotton warehouse, today it houses a private collection. The six members of the WABA Group (World Association of Brick Artists), including the cur-

photos - Monika Gass



rent president of the AIC/IAC, Jacques Kaufmann, each installed one object in the square for the IAC/AIC Congress. We celebrated the end of this day as well as the conclusion of the Congress in the idyllic square outside the cathedral in Argentona. The two major Catalan artists Joan Serra and Mía Llauder were exhibiting their work simultaneously in two of the galleries in Argentona, which were open for visitors and were well frequented! The Museu del Càntir and the summer house of J. Puig i Cadafach were also open and freely accessible, so the participants could stroll around Argentona, admire the exhibitions, catch up with friends at the tables and later, dance to the music of an enthusiastic rock band. But this was not the end yet – ceramists just don't seem able to stop. On the Saturday and Sunday, further activities were planned such as walking tours and visits to galleries. One of the main attractions was without doubt the presentation of the book, *Claudí Casanovas – Ceràmiques 1975-2015* at the Joan Gaspar Gallery, in the presence of the maestro himself.

As in every IAC/AIC Congress, there were pre and post-conference tours. The pre-conference tour took participants to the region of Aragon and Valencia, where ceramics in the Moorish Mudéjar style could be admired. The post-conference tour was devoted to the south with Seville, Cordoba and Granada.

One of the most famous murals in Barcelona, the Kiss, brings us to the conclusion of this IAC article. It is a ceramic mosaic composed of 4,000 ceramic tiles, each showing a photo on the theme of freedom – “Let's kiss and say goodbye to Barcelona”.

In 2018, the conference will be in Taiwan.  
We'll meet again there!

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above - **Ceramic Perspectives** at the Sant Rafael Pavilion with works from Australia, New Zealand, Slovenia and Israel  
below - **Members' Exhibition** at the Design Hub

