FRENCH CERAMIST

# ARIANE COISSIEUX

## *Combination of Poetry and Technology*



Porcelain pendant lamp with yellow celadon glaze. Metal element by: Jac Roger, Keramsteel®
*photo - © Remi Chauvin*

The view from the window falls on a group of trees, right behind it there is unadulterated nature. Ariane Coissieux, abbreviated as Ariane C, steps out of her studio into the open air holding a porcelain lamp. In the greenery, there is a tub of celadon glaze into which she dips the vessel. The birds are singing in accompaniment. She has been studying this technology for years. She wanted to develop translucent vessels that glow in a very special way, from the inside. She repeatedly experimented with form and glaze until she finally achieved the desired effect. Ariane C is persistent and tenacious. This has to do with her surroundings. It requires a lot of willpower to live on the elevated, steppe-like plane of Larzac, a personality that knows what it wants. “I would like to do research for a year, the experiments are the most exciting part of my work,” she says. “In a radius of 100 km, you can find all the rocks that are necessary for the glazes. In my mind, I am always trying things out. I do a lot of glaze research. Special emotions, effects of the light, the beautiful skies – that is what I would like to express.”

The remote hamlet of Régagnas in Occitania has a precarious location. To the south, the Vis has carved a gorge almost 300 metres deep, to the east the view stretches to the Cevennes. This is the environment in which French ceramist Ariane C works. Her studios are situated in a number of ancient limestone houses, one for stoneware, one for porcelain. This is where her sumptuous teawares are made with their oilspot-temmoku glazes, which are in demand for the tea ceremony, even among her Far Eastern customers. Her range covers everything from tableware to architecture-related art and sculptures. Several times a year, interested amateurs come to learn the whole process of ceramics and ceramists from many countries come to gain further training. Ariane C runs a school of ceramics, when Régagnas becomes the focal point of the world for Chinese, Australian, American, New



Shower with stoneware tiles and relief celadon glaze and copper red. 2.20 x 1.20 m *photo - Ariane Coissieux*

Zealand, Malaysian and European ceramics makers.

"I was born in a pottery," replies Ariane C with a twinkle in her eye to the question of how she found her way into this craft. "From 1970 on, my parents bought several ruined houses on the edge of the Cevennes." Her parents discovered the abandoned village in their search for a ceramics studio and a stud farm. In the collection of various houses, they found the prerequisites to implement their plans. Back then, her father Christian Coissieux set about founding his own school of ceramics. As a child and teenager, Ariane experimented with various kinds of clay and glazes for fun. "Until I was 18, it was all about play." Being interested in science, she studied biology and chemistry. But with every holiday visit, the urge became stronger to create her own work in the studio. After her first degree, she left university, returned and did a professional craft apprenticeship. "My father felt it was important for me to gain experience in other places too, but he always remained my mentor," says Ariane C. Besides craft skills and mastering the challenges of technique, he taught her always to seek her own artistic form of expression. A never-ending search.

Ariane collected a great deal of inspiration on her travels. Her first international encounter with ceramics outside Europe also turned out to be one of the most exciting. An invitation at the age of 22 took her to the house of Maria Martinez in New Mexico. The artist was no longer alive but her work was in evidence everywhere. The way she treated the clay left a profound and lasting impression. The beautiful forms of the symmetrical vessels were not wheel thrown but handbuilt. Especially the use of glaze – matt native American designs on a glossy background. "It was the first time I

She wanted to develop translucent vessels that glow in a very special way, from the inside. She repeatedly experimented with form and glaze until she finally achieved the desired effect. Ariane C is persistent and tenacious.

immersed myself so totally in ceramics. After that, I threw vessels with small feet. The foot was so important to me that I cut them out and they became autonomous." She describes these objects as flying saucers.

Asia also left a profound impression on her. In 2015, she was invited to take part in an exhibition in the Forbidden City. It was the first display of contemporary art to take place there. "I had always dreamed of seeing the Imperial Palace. To me it had great symbolic force. But I had never dared to imagine exhibiting there. Our mentors come from China. They invented high-temperature firing and the finest glazes. We are still playing catch up." A year later she travelled to Taiwan to take part in several exhibitions and to give talks. This culture too fired her with enthusiasm. She is impressed by the knowledge people have of ceramics. They understand the way she works and the complex glazes. They know how much experience and skill special temmoku glazes require. At a symposium in 2016, in Eskisehir in Turkey, she built a terracotta figure over two metres in height.

Ariane works in her studio with porcelain and stoneware. She loves the translucency and delicacy of porcelain but also the robustness of stoneware. For her experiments she needs not only a range of different materials but also a variety of kilns. "I am currently busy kiln building. It is about precision," she explains. She already has several small kilns for

**Twilight on Etna**, from the Keramsteel® brand
(Metal: Jac Roger, stoneware: Ariane C)
*photo - © Eric Alain*





Oilspot and iron blue glaze, 1320°C, Ruoshui Gallery Taipei (Taiwan) 2017

glaze tests, but they are not suitable for the whole spectrum. There is an old kiln in the studio that a kiln builder constructed for her father. The dimensions are impressive, with eight gas burners heating the kiln, which has a capacity of a cubic metre.

"I like to fit out whole houses," says the artist, smiling. With Jac Roger, she has found the perfect partner for this. The ideas from both of them have quite naturally flowed together to form a whole. Roger creates the decorated metal tables, Ariane C the sweeping washbasins with various decors. One of their latest products is a chair inspired by the Renaissance, with ceramic inlay on the arms. Ariane C has thus extended her creative range: "For me, this is a great good fortune. We both leave each other the space to expess themselves". The brand that brings the two artists together is called Keramsteel.

On 7 July, there is an anniversary in Régagnas. Ariane C and her sister, who runs a stud farm, are celebrating their 30th anniversary there with a festival. On the programme, there is a 1,000 Bowl Show with work by graduates of the school of ceramics and a display of dressage with horses from Yasmine Coissieux.

*DORIS WEILAND*
*is an art historian and a journalist. She works freelance for press and TV and has written books on cultural history.*

**Ariane Coissieux:** Child of nature, infant of a wide steppes universe where horses are raised and live freely… Born in 1974, Ariane's first ceramics were created during her early childhood in her father's studio in southern France.
As a professionally qualified ceramist for over 20 years and a Master Ceramic Artist since 2009, Ariane creates unique pieces ranging from artistic works to large scale architectural pieces. She enjoys the challenge of fusing functional and aesthetic needs.
2015 she co-created Keramsteel®, together with the metal artist Jac Roger. The brand also welcomes collaboration with other creators, most recently the upholsterer, Nicolas Mauclert. Open to the world around her, Ariane enjoys being invited to worldwide international events every year, whether they are symposiums, lectures or exhibitions. For the past 15 years, her work has been exhibited from Taiwan to the USA, Turkey, Singapore, Thailand, Paris, Brussels and throughout Europe, as well as the Ancestral Imperial Temple in the Forbidden City, Beijing… Ariane C also directs the international professional ceramics school AGIR Céramique, which was founded by her father Christian Coissieux 40 years ago. She teaches techniques and shares the cultures of this wonderful way of finding joy every day: being a ceramist!

*photo - © Aline Lange*



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