

## The Jealous Potter

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UCCA Clay presents “The Jealous Potter” from March 30, 2025, to June 15, 2025, bringing together works by 11 women artists across various media. Drawing from the histories of ceramics, reflections on techniques, methodologies, and perspectives of female identity and experience, this exhibition delves into the contextually intricate connection between women and pottery.

### Exhibition Period:

2025.3.31 – 2025.6.15

### Location:

Gallery 1 and Gallery 2

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YIXING, China—From March 31, 2025, to June 15, 2025, UCCA Clay presents “The Jealous Potter,” bringing together works by 11 women artists across various media—including sculpture, painting, installation, video, and community-based artistic practices—to explore the intricate connections between women and ceramics from both technical and symbolic dimensions. As one of humanity’s earliest technological endeavors, pottery emerged alongside the development of settled civilizations and has at various points in time been associated with fertility worship, women’s labor, and rich cultural significance. Centered around the technological and philosophical implications of containers and their usage”, this exhibition examines ceramics’ history, material practice, and relationship with gender roles. This exhibition is curated by UCCA’s Yao Mengxi.

Participating artists include: Angel, Chan On Kei (b. 1993, Macau); Fei Yining (b. 1990, Harbin); Heidi Lau (b. 1987, Macau); Meng Yangyang (b. 1983, Chongqing); Tsuda Kumie (b. 1980, Kanagawa, Japan); Karin Sander (b. 1957, Bensberg, Germany); Arlene Shechet (b. 1951, New York); Yao Bo (b. 1967, Chongqing); Angela Yuen (b. 1991, Hong Kong); Zhang Kerui (b. 1991, Liuzhou, Guangxi); and Zhang Yibei (b. 1992, Daqing, Heilongjiang).

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The English title of this exhibition, “The Jealous Potter,” references French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’s book of the same name, (*La Potière jalouse* in the original French) referencing its exploration of pottery’s symbolic ties to the female experience, creation, and cultural mythology. This concept can be viewed as a guiding thread, weaving through ceramics histories, technological craft, and evolving notions of agency. Pottery, one of humanity’s earliest techniques for shaping matter, is a development closely linked to women’s labor. Ceramic vessels, or containers, themselves embody dual symbolism of containment and concealment. Fire, as the transformative force at the heart of ceramics and pottery,

enables the metamorphosis of raw material into durable form. In *The Jealous Potter*, Lévi-Strauss examines the act of pottery production as a site of where technical mastery and mythological meaning converge, but often get entangled with gendered power dynamics. Within this framework, the fire that creates ceramics symbolizes more than material transformation—it marks a shift in agency, as women move from being “containers” to “creators” who harness and command the process.

The exhibition unfolds across three thematic sections. The first, “Mother Goddess,” traces the deep connections between women and pottery through history, mythology, and social development. As one of the earliest material traces of civilization, ceramics played a central role in fertility rituals while encoding early understandings of life and nature through form and ornamentation. Across cultures, pottery has remained rooted in women’s material practices, tied to domesticity, food storage, and fertility, reflecting the central roles women hold in early matrilineal societies. Over time, these roles were mythologized and sanctified, giving rise to the “Mother Goddess” archetype—a figure that unites the imagery of the vessel or container, womanhood, and the force of creation. This symbolic foundation sets the stage for the exhibition’s exploration of ceramics as a vessel-oriented medium.

In this section, Angel, Chan On Kei’s sculpture prompts reflection on the “container” role of the female body in society while Heidi Lau’s burial-inspired ceramics incorporate symbols of fertility like gourds and snakes, as well as drawing from Taoist mythology and colonial history to engage with the supernatural and emotional. Fei Yining contemplates the symbiotic narrative between plants and the female body, using clay to express the transformation of a woman’s role from a mother to an educator, while Zhang Kerui uses fire as a transformative medium, examining the philosophical boundaries between material and perception.

The second section, “Container Technologies,” sets a foundational theme for the exhibition. This section invites viewers to consider the vessel as a medium in itself. The dialectic between “emptiness” (the void) and “presence” (existence) reflects the nature of container technologies—a container functions through its capacity to hold, facilitating dynamic exchanges of matter and purpose. Yet, like foundational infrastructures such as reservoirs and dwellings, it often recedes into the background, unnoticed—much like the labor historically performed by women, whose contributions have long been overlooked. Museums, too, share this quality of containment, offering a sanctuary for human expression, a space

where subjectivity takes form, as exemplified by Karin Sander's work that removes a thin layer of paint from the wall, inviting reflection on the space itself as a "container" for art.

In this context, Angela Yuen reconstructs fragments of ceramic to reimagine Hong Kong's layered history, revealing a unique intersection of local and global social dynamics. Zhang Yibei explores materiality as a means of navigating psychological defense and ethical care, reflecting on the intricate relationships between self, others, and the material world. Karin Sander employs a subtractive approach to dissolve the boundaries between the material and the immaterial, redefining space itself. In another series, Heidi Lau weaves fragmented memories and a transcendent sense of nostalgia into an allegory of motherhood.

The third chapter, "Return to Nature," adopts a non-anthropocentric perspective to explore the nature of ceramics as objects, their temporal dimensions, and their roles within ecological networks. Matter is not merely a resource for human use; it possesses its own inherent essence. The process of ceramic formation transcends human control over time, underscoring the material's autonomy. Simultaneously, the durability and malleability of ceramic works enable them to exist on a longer, multi-generational scale—becoming, in effect, "vessels of time." The act of firing ceramics also serves as a transformation of both material and emotion, reshaping bonds and relationships. For example, the communal labor and shared trust involved in Yao Bo's wood-kiln-firing reconstruct non-transactional connections between people, nature, and one another.

In this section, Meng Yangyang's paintings, combined with installation elements, emphasize the materiality of painting as a spatial form. Mineral pigments are incorporated, with their granular textures echoing natural formations, capturing the passage of time and material movement. Tsuda Kumie engages flames, ash, and clay to in a dialogue that relinquishes control in the firing process, highlighting the unpredictability of natural interactions. Arlene Shechet's sculptures, imbued with organic dynamism, reveal the profound interrelations between bodies, space, and material. Pottery-making, as highlighted in this section, reflects an ecological dialogue, where materials undergo transformation across different domains in a human and non-human, material, collaboration.

From the creation myths in "Mother Goddess" to the philosophical reflections conveyed in "Container Technologies," and further to a broader, more nuanced perspective in "Return to

Nature,” this exhibition does not limit itself to viewing ceramics as a mere material for artistic creation. Instead, ceramics are approached from a medium-based perspective, with analysis on the multifaceted meanings ceramics carry within historical contexts, cultural symbolism, technological innovation, and gender structures. This exhibition explores the profound significance of ceramics as a medium while providing a platform for female artists to assert their agency while redefining the significance of ceramics as a medium, inviting visitors to reflect upon the powerful relationship between materiality, self-expression, and identity.

### Support and Sponsorship

UCCA thanks the members of UCCA Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partner Aranya, Lead Art Book Partner DIOR, Lead Imaging Partner vivo, Presenting Partner Bloomberg, and Supporting Partners AIA, Barco, Dulux, Genelec, SKP Beijing and Stey.

### Public Programs

On the day the exhibition opens to the public, its curator, Yao Mengxi, will lead visitors on a guided tour through the gallery space to offer insights on how curatorial practices connect ceramics with themes of womanhood, technology, and media. On the same day, UCCA will also host a conversation with artists Fei Yining, Heidi Lau, and Zhang Kerui, who will discuss their individual experiences and approaches to ceramic creation around the topic “Ceramics as a Vessel of Time.” Additionally, UCCA will collaborate with artist Yao Bo in an immersive documentation of the traditional wood-fired ceramics process at an art community in Chongqing’s Gele Mountain, a space built on the principles of mutual support and camaraderie. Footage from the kiln-firing process in May is set to be screened online later that month on May 30th.

In conjunction with the exhibition, UCCA Kids has designed a series of art workshops for children aged six and above. Led by experienced instructors, these workshops introduce young participants to the works of various artists in the exhibition, guiding them in exploring the unique techniques and artistic languages before creating their own works. The first workshop, “Media and the Female Expression,” invites children to engage with ceramics as a creative medium, incorporating materials such as clay, fabric, and metal to articulate their interpretations of the theme. The second workshop, “Nature and Body Resonance,” explores the intrinsic connections between nature, the body, and ceramic art. These sessions are

designed for children to reflect on post-human ecological perspectives, heightening their sensory engagement with to the natural world while experimenting with organic materials such as leaves and stones in their ceramic artworks.

\*Children under the age of six must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

#### **About UCCA**

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China's premier museum of modern and contemporary art. Committed to the belief that art can deepen lives and transcend boundaries, UCCA presents a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives across four architecturally and programmatically distinct locations. Owned by a group of committed patrons, it is funded by donations, sponsorship, ticketing, and proceeds from the commercial activities of UCCA Lab. UCCA has presented more than 200 exhibitions and welcomed more than ten million visitors since its founding in Beijing in 2007 as the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art.

#### **About UCCA Clay**

UCCA Clay is a museum situated at the intersection of ceramics and contemporary art. Located in Yixing, Jiangsu province—China's "City of Ceramics"—it anchors the city's reimagined Creative and Cultural Ceramic Avenue district. Designed by Kengo Kuma and Associates, the 2,400-square-meter building is the Japanese architect's first built work to employ clay as a primary material. Featuring a remarkable façade made of hand-fired terracotta tiles, the building showcases Yixing's renowned purple clay ("zisha") that began to be used in pottery during the Song Dynasty. UCCA Clay's program takes inspiration from the region's unique cultural heritage, drawing together Yixing's thousand-year ceramic history with UCCA's global artistic vision. The museum's exhibitions center contemporary work in the medium of ceramics by Chinese and international artists, while also offering further context and facilitating exchange and dialogue with the wider world. Opened in 2024, it is the first contemporary art institution in Yixing.

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## Appendix

### About the Artists

#### Angel, Chan On Kei

Angel, Chan On Kei (b. 1993, Macau) holds a Master of Arts from Taipei University of Education and a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Visual Arts from Macao Polytechnic Institute. She also studied in the Sculpture Department at the Taiwan University of Arts as an exchange student. Her works have been shortlisted for the “Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennale” (2021), “the 24th Art Exhibition of Chiayi City” (2020) and “the Honourable Mentions of Orient Foundation Art Award” (2017) and “the 13th International Ceramics Competition Mino”, Japan (2024).

#### Fei Yining

Fei Yining (b. 1990, Harbin, Heilongjiang Province; lives and works in Shanghai) graduated from the School of Journalism at Fudan University and Christie’s Education. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions including “Resistance of the Sleepers” (UCCA Dune Museum, Qinhuangdao, 2020); “From New York to Brussels; Los Angeles to Shanghai” (SPURS Gallery, Beijing, 2020); and “Li Family Residence Hongyun Exhibition” (White Space, Beijing, 2021).

#### Heidi Lau

Heidi Lau (b. 1987, Macau; lives and works in New York) has had solo and two person exhibitions, including “Chrysalis Spectre” (with Leelee Chan, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles, 2024); “A Cacophony of Rocks” (Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, 2024); “Shadow Speak” (with Biraj Dodiya, Bureau, New York, 2023); “Garden as a Cosmic Terrain” (Green-Wood Cemetery, New York, 2022), “Empire Recast” (Grand Lisboa Palace, Macau, 2021), “Spirit Vessels” (Matthew Brown, Los Angeles, 2020), and “Blood Echoes” (AALA Gallery, Los Angeles, 2019). Her group exhibitions include “When I Kiss You, I Can Taste Your Soul” (KOTARO NUKAGA, Tokyo, 2024); “Shanshui: Echoes and Signals” (M+ Museum, Hong Kong, 2024); “Cosmos Cinema: The 14th Shanghai Biennale” (Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2023); “Horizons: Is there anybody out there?” (Antenna Space, Shanghai, 2023); “And the Moon be Still as Bright” (Harper’s, New York, 2023); “Body Without Organs” (Chapter, New York, 2023), “River Styx” (Sea View, Los Angeles, 2023), and “Crossing” (KOTARO NUKAGA, Tokyo, 2023). She presented her work “Apparition” for the Macau-China Collateral Exhibition at the 58th Venice Biennale.

### **Meng Yangyang**

Meng Yangyang (b. 1983, Chongqing, China; lives and works in Shanghai) holds a Bachelors of Fine Aarts and Master of Fine Arts in Oil Painting from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Her notable solo exhibitions include “Barbie,Cells and Atones” (MOCA SHANGHAI PAVILION, Shanghai, China, 2023); “Meng Yangyang” (Danqiu Contemporary, Beijing, 2023); “Ideal Phantasm Body” (Lutra Gallery, Shanghai, 2023); “The Diary” (Gallery Tatsuya Books, Shanghai, 2022); “To Be Heard In A Whisper” (BROWNIE Project, Shanghai, 2021); “The Spring Comes” (55 Gallery, Shanghai, 2018); “LEGATO” (55 Gallery, Shanghai, 2017); and “Solitude” (Long Art Ranking Gallery, Beijing, 2015). She has participated in group exhibitions such as “GLOBAL PAINTING LA NUOVA PITTURA CINESE (Mart Roverto, Italy, 2024); “GLOBAL PAINTING A NEW GENERATION OF CHINESE ARTISTS” (Parallel Exhibition in China, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2024); “NOCTURNAL BALLADS” (Perrotin, Shanghai, China, 2023); “No Exhibition” (Himalayas Museum, Shanghai, China, 2019); “The Contemporary of Figural Art: Round 4” (Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China, 2018); “Texture of Time-The Artwork Exhibition of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute”(the National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China, 2017); “On the Paper” (Luohu Art Gallery, Shenzhen, China, 2016); “Utopia&Beyond” (Castello di Rivara-Museo D'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy, 2016); “Wall Power-Wallpost Artist Exhibition”(Today Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2016); “The 10th Shanghai Biennale City Project”(Kerry Center, Shanghai, China, 2015).

### **Kumie Tsuda**

Kumie Tsuda (b. 1980, Kanagawa, Japan, lives and works in Kyoto). She holds a BFA from Tokyo University of the Arts in 2003 and an MA from Tokyo University of the Arts in 2005. She has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including “Kumie Tsuda: Plan in My Head Like Planet” (Mirrored Gardens, Guangzhou, China, 2024); “Sketch for Getting Used to New Things” (Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA, 2012). She has participated in group exhibitions including “Koki Tanaka, Kumie Tsuda: Rogue Objects” (ASU Art Museum, Arizona, USA, 2019); “The Portrait Show” (Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA, 2018); “Crafting the Collection” (ASU Art Museum, Arizona, USA, 2016); “JAPON”(Centre d'art contemporain (CAC) - Meymac, France, 2014); “They Are Us: Animal Identity and the Anthropomorphic Urge” (Rick Wester Fine Art, New York, NY, USA, 2013); and “flowers80.1” (TRAUMARIS | SPACE, NADiff apart 3 floor, Tokyo, Japan, 2013).

#### **Karin Sander**

Karin Sander (b. 1957, Bensberg, Germany; lives and works in Berlin and Zurich). She studied at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart and at the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum in New York. From 1999 to 2007, Sander was a professor at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee. From 2007-2023, she held a professorship of Art and Architecture at ETH Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich. Since 2021, she has been the Director of Visual Arts at the Akademie der Künste Berlin. Her notable solo exhibitions include “Neighbours” (Architecture Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2023); “Chambre Directe-Schubiger” (St. Gallen, Switzerland, 2021). She has participated in the group exhibitions including “Der König ist tot, lang lebe die Königin” (Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Germany, 2023); “Scale:Sculpture” (Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spanish, 2023); “Fun Feminism”(Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland, 2022); “Pop, Minimal, and Figurative Art ” (SFMOMA San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA, 2020); and “1980-NOW” (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, 2012).

#### **Arlene Shechet**

Arlene Shechet (b. 1951, New York City; lives and works in New York City and The Hudson Valley). She earned a BA from New York University and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1978. After graduating, she taught at RISD from 1978 to 1985 and at the Parsons School of Design from 1984 to 1995. Shechet’s work is in over fifty public collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Centre Pompidou, National Gallery of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Hirshhorn Museum, Nasher Sculpture Center, Walker Art Center, and Whitney Museum of American Art. She has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including “All at Once” (The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA, 2015); “From Here On Now” (The Phillips Collection, Washington, USA, 2016); “Porcelain, No Simple Matter” (The Frick Collection, New York, USA, 2016-2017); “Full Steam Ahead” (Madison Square Park, New York, USA, 2018); “Making Knowing” (The Drawing Center, New York, USA, 2021); “STUFF” (Pace Gallery, New York, USA, 2022); “Girl Group” (Storm King Art Center, New York, USA, 2024); and “Disrupt the View” (Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, USA, 2022-25).

#### **Yao Bo**

Yao Bo (b. 1967, Chongqing, China; lives and works in Chengdu). She is currently teaching in the Ceramic Art program of the Department of Handcrafted Arts at the School of Design,



Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Her work has been collected by the Sichuan Art Museum, and she took part in the recording of Ceramic Design and Production, a teaching series for design programs at China's eight major art academies. She has participated in the group shows "Chongqing Chill" (Kassel, Germany, 2001); "The First Bashu Ceramic Art Exhibition" (where her work Poor Worm won the Gold Award, 2002); "The Code of Words" joint exhibition (2009); "The Fifth China Contemporary Handicraft Academy Exhibition" (where her work *That's It* received an Excellence Award, 2009); and "The Everyone's East Lake Art Project" (2010).

#### **Angela Yuen**

Angela Yuen (b. 1991, Hong Kong) graduated from the Department of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University. She has presented solo exhibitions including "Site-Specific Art Installation: Land ho!" (Hong Kong Museum of Arts, Hong Kong, 2023-2025), "The Magic Makers" (Wyndham Social, Hong Kong, 2023), and "The Lost Time Travel Machine" (Contemporary by Angela Li, Hong Kong, 2020). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions including "Art Central 2024 - Contemporary by Angela Li" (Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong, 2024), "Ink Asia 2023 - Ink Plus: Light Play" (Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong, 2023), and "1.5 - 15 Years of Eli Klein Gallery" (Eli Klein Gallery, New York, 2022).

#### **Zhang Kerui**

Zhang Kerui (b. 1991; lives and works in Shanghai) graduated from East China Normal University with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Public Art in 2014 and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia with a Master of Fine Art in Painting in 2017. She has participated in group exhibitions such as "Exit" (AIKE, Shanghai, 2023); "Badlands" (Totalab, Shanghai, 2023); "Aisle" (DangXia Art Space, Beijing, 2023); "Players 6+1" (Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai, 2021); "Resistance of the Sleepers" (UCCA Dune, Hebei, 2020).

#### **Zhang Yibei**

Yibei Zhang (b. 1992, born in Daqing, Heilongjiang Province; lives and works in Beijing) studied sculpture at the University of the Arts London and the Royal College of Art. Her work is held in the collections of the prestigious Song Art Museum and Longlati Foundation. Zhang's solo exhibitions include "Please No Helmet" (Longlati Foundation, Shanghai, China, 2024); "A Vase In Everything" (BANK/MABSOCIETY, Shanghai, 2021). She has participated in group exhibitions including "The 2nd TAG-New Contemporary" (TAG, Qingdao, China, 2024);

"Triennial 2023 Home is Where the Haunt Is" (X Museum, Beijing, 2023); "BODILY REACTION: VITALIZING THE BARE LIFE (Taikang Space, Beijing, 2023). "The Disconnect Generation" (Song Art Museum, Beijing, 2022); "Wisdom of Everyday Life-Contemporary Art Invitation Exhibition" (Museum of Contemporary Art Yinchuan, Yinchuan, 2021); "The 4th Today's Documents" (Today Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2019); and "Whatever Works Whatever It Takes" (Goethe Institut, Beijing, China, 2019), and more.