



new CERAMICS

07

NEUE KERAMIK

20 Years of Ceramics in Cuba

XXth TERRACOTTA 2006 in Santiago de Cuba



ILLUSTRATIONS

top -
Calle Santa Lucia in
the old part of
Santiago de Cuba

right -
Berraco artists' colony

bottom -
The pottery in the
Luis Díaz Oduardo arts
workshop



Santiago de Cuba lies on the fringe of the Caribbean, in the south east of Cuba surrounded by the green hills of the Sierra Maestra, around 950 km from Havana and is the second largest city on the island with about 500,000 inhabitants.

Santiago was founded in 1515 as one of the first seven cities in Cuba, and it is famous for its 10-day carnival in July for the name day of its patron saint, St. James (Santiago).

The son music style originated in Santiago, and it is also the birthplace of famous musicians like Compay Segundo, Ibrahim Ferrer; in its five hundred-year history, it has always been well-known for the joie de vivre and hospitality of its inhabitants. The large number of French people who fled to Santiago as a result of the

French revolution and the related slave uprising in Haiti certainly contributed to this. Their influence can still be seen of the architecture in the city and the names in the local telephone book.

The rum that originated in Santiago is also world famous: Bacardi originated here, and an excellent rum is still produced in the former Bacardi distillery.

More recently, Santiago came to prominence through Castro's storming of Moncada barracks in 1953, the real beginning of the Cuban revolution. Other Cubans refer to this part of the island as "tierra caliente" (hot earth) and do not mean only the particularly warm climate in the region.

Since 1968, there has been an annual ceramics symposium here called "Terracotta", for fifteen days in May. Cuban and international ceramists meet at the Taller Cultural Luis Díaz Oduardo, an arts workshop run by the provincial government. Terracotta is organised by the Provincial Council of Fine Artists, the Office of the Municipal Custodian of the Arts, the Caguayo Foundation and UNEAC (the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists).

The workshop was initiated in the 1980s by the three artists, Guarionex Ferrer, José Rolando Montero and Angel Laborde, to further the development of ceramic art. In spite of individual efforts aimed at disseminating it, this artistic genre was virtually unknown in Santiago at that time.

A further stimulus for the initiation of Terracotta was the plan for tourist development in the area. This happened even before Cuba was opened to package tourists as we know them today. On the basis of this plan, a number of artists' colonies were set up in the vicinity.

This year was the twentieth anniversary of Terracotta, and coincidentally Taller Cultural Luis Díaz Oduardo was celebrating its third anniversary under the management of Israel Tamayo. This organisation is highly

committed to furthering other projects as well.

In 2007, 17 ceramic artists from Canada, the USA, Brazil and Cuba came together to exchange views in workshops and discussion groups.

The symposium was opened by a joint exhibition of work by the Cuban artist, Xiomara Gutiérrez, who has participated in every Terracotta so far, and the Canadian Pierre Blais, under the title of "Un solo lenguaje" (A Single Language). One of the most interesting moments was a meeting of the participants with the founders of the workshop together with an exhibition covering work from twenty years of Terracotta, giving an overview of twenty years of working in ceramics in the Caribbean.

A further high-point was the presentation of the results of the project, "Arte del Fuego" (Art from the Fire) by the artist Catherine Merrill from the USA and the Cuban Antonio Lewis. They have been working on this project for international exchanges and



continuing education in ceramics since 2002.

The international symposium was concluded with a joint exhibition showing all of the 69 pieces that had been created together in this time.

Twenty years of Terracotta have left a lasting impression on Santiago de Cuba: dotted around the town there are sculptural ceramics such as the mural frieze created during Terracotta 2005. So twenty years of Terracotta could be described as an unqualified success!

This event may take place again in 2007. If you are interested, please contact the author.

ILLUSTRATIONS

top -
mural in
Calle Enramada in the
centre of Santiago

left -
Rafael Miranda and José
Vázquez at work

centre -
the exhibition
"Un solo lenguaje"

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