



Secretos de tierra, (display view), 2021

SECRETOS DE TIERRA

Familia Panduro + Elvira Smeke
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GUADALAJARA

The 19th century was a period of formal renewal for popular artistic production in Mexico. Special appreciation deserves the clay work that, within the spectrum of techniques that were practiced at that time, reached a particularly rich and varied use. To get fully into this noble material, it is convenient to talk about the Panduro family, which occupies a prominent place in the elaboration of clay and crafts. This lineage began a history of creations with the birth of Pantaleón Panduro in 1847, who opened a field of exploration in a period of innovation and manual experimentation. His sons Timoteo and Ponciano were responsible for spreading this tradition to subsequent generations.

Thanks to the cultural influence of neoclassicism, which still extended its dogma in Mexico at the end of the 19th century and through the traditional resources of baked clay and the vision of rural Jalisco, the Panduro defined a new type of artisan production. The molding of their busts and figures were aligned with the cultural canon exercised by the academies, only now they included the festive and delusional imaginary of Tlaquepaque. The result is a hybrid that combines European-style representation rules with genuinely popular roots. Undoubtedly, the Panduro family has a lot to do with the current prestige in the Mexican manual tradition, having promoted clay and ceramic molding in western Mexico.

In the field of contemporary Mexican production, the work of creators such as Elvira Smeke stands out, a key figure who uses clay as one of her favorite materials in which she applies various techniques and formal resources. Through sculpture, painting, drawing, embroidery, photography, performance and video, Smeke defines his works and ideas with great rigor.

Using different types of pastes and clay, his pieces are loaded with force from the very meaning that is given off from these materials. Flexibility and toughness are contradictory characteristics that Smeke addresses with conceptual agility, always ensuring that these attributes are present in his sculptures.

The connection of this artist with the Panduro is not limited to the materials, which can be confirmed in the photographs that, through the research she carried out on the cookbook she inherited from her grandmother, document the culinary tradition of her paternal family.

Through documentary representations that show each of the traditional dishes that were served at his home - visual forms that partially reveal these chemical secrets,

Smeke shares and hides the information of the flavors and the products, for this he criticizes the figurative woman and her place within the domestic structure. The interesting thing is that many of his works refer to the private areas and spaces of a home. These characteristics of the intimate environment of a house and a family are also present in the work of the Panduro. Along the same lines, Elvira's paper paintings reconstruct the memory of her childhood places.

Smeke and the Panduro artisans not only share their interest in clay and earth -elements present in the conceptualization of a geographical landscape-, but also deeply portray the hidden vision and customs of a cultural environment. His productions are secret radiographs of a context full of history and community tension.

About the artists

Panduro

The most important pottery tradition of working with clay in San Pedro Tlaquepaque, Jalisco, is that of Don Pantaleón Panduro.

His full name is Pantaleón de la Trinidad Panduro Martínez, he was born on July 27, 1847, endowed with extraordinary innate qualities for clay modeling, since he never received formal artistic education, indigenous by birth, executed human figures and sculptures with a singular realism, from great leaders of national and international politics, passing through everyday characters on the public scene.

Celebrities of his time required his services, due to his great skill as a sculptor, it is also said that in just thirty minutes, he was able to capture the features of a character with great luxury of detail, with only his fingers and some small estiques of wood, and so he was able to make the clay speak, that is why they called him "THE WITCH".

Thus, the surname Panduro, is synonymous of pottery, at his death in 1909, the pottery tradition of this region was already fully rooted and consolidated. We must give due importance to the traditions of the past, which are part of ourselves and which give us personality to other nations. (Oscar Ibarra research, 2021)

Elvira Smeke

Elvira Smeke (Mexico, 1978) is an artist trained as an art historian and photographer. She is currently a multidisciplinary artist exploring sculpture, painting, drawing, installation, photography and video. She uses everyday materials, specifically objects of domestic use, as well as found objects such as tree leaves and stones. She also uses delicate objects like lace, but combines them with materials that are mainly used by men, creating both a tension between them, and also a harmonious fusion.

Smeke's critical route in her work hinges on a feminist philosophy, with an important influence from Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous and the gender issues posed by Judith Butler. In addition, she reaches into literature, the use of language and writing. Her work also has an ecological facet from the point of view of the Anthropocene theory.

Smeke analyzes what it means to be a woman in our contemporary era, evoking ideologies and tasks imposed on women throughout history, but recapturing them from the perspective of the joy of being a woman. Her work touches on the problematic of femicide and the suffering of women in a phallogocentric society. On the other hand, her work is performative. She takes long walks and sometimes collects found objects which she uses as a starting point to create, uses her own body as a form, uses her own life to tell a story and is aware of what she calls the accident: which is the uncontrolled resulting part of an action.

About Páramo

Páramo is a contemporary art gallery founded in 2012 in Guadalajara, Mexico that represents and advances the work and practices of artists from around the world.

Gallery Hours

Monday - Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Closed Saturday and Sunday

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