



MIRKA DRAPANIOTOU

PORTFOLIO | CATAPHRACTS



ABOUT	03
ARTIST STATEMENT	04
CATAPHRACTS	05
CV	14
CONTACT	32

CONTENTS



ABOUT

Mirka Drapaniotou (Greece, 1971) is a versatile ceramicist who bridges the rich heritage of Greek ceramic traditions with innovative, conceptual explorations of clay. Born in Athens, Greece, she began her creative journey studying fashion and costume design, working in the fashion industry from 1992 to 2000. Her transition into the visual arts led her to discover a passion for ceramics, where she developed her skills under the guidance of respected teachers like Marilena Michopoulou and Menandros Papadopoulos between 2013 and 2017.

Her artistic education also includes extensive training in free-hand drawing and chromatics with Irene Koutridou and Stavros Bonatsos from 2012 to 2019. Mirka expanded her expertise by studying classic sculptural techniques with Altin Patselis from 2014 to 2016 and exploring form design with visual artist and ceramist Nikos Sklavenitis between 2015 and 2017.

Currently, Mirka teaches at the Clay Form Sculpture School ‘Keramikes Morfes’, where she inspires new artists while also maintaining her own studio practice. Since 2020, she has collaborated as an exclusive partner with the renowned Greek fashion brand Zeus & Dione, designing unique utilitarian household items that seamlessly blend traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics.

Mirka is a founding member of the art collective TERRACTIVA, through which she actively contributes to the artistic community. Her work has been exhibited in several group shows, including Clay Stories I and II at MELANITRHOS Gallery, the Metamorphosis exhibition at Eleni Marneri Gallery in 2019, and most notably, the inaugural Biennale of Contemporary Ceramics in Santorini in 2024. She also regularly participates in seminars and symposia, continually deepening her understanding of ceramics and expanding her creative practice.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Mirka Drapaniotou's ceramics inhabit the space between dualities, where fragility merges with strength and the echoes of tradition blend seamlessly with contemporary expression. Her practice is a deep engagement with the vulnerabilities of clay, a material that she coaxes into revealing its hidden beauty in both the precision of its shaping and the eloquent embrace of imperfection.

Drapaniotou often begins her creative journey by crafting flawless forms, only to reshape and reassemble them into intricate, symbiotic structures before firing. This transformation speaks to the delicate balance between control and surrender, as the forms evolve beyond their origins, embracing the fluidity of change. Drapaniotou's signature technique—piercing the clay with needle-like precision—becomes a meditative act, a way of testing the material's limits while turning it into a translucent veil that blurs the line between the tangible and the ethereal. Her creations frequently take the shape of modular compositions, where individual elements nestle and interact with each other in a state of dynamic balance. These structures invite endless possibilities for arrangement, embodying a spirit of connection and interdependence, with each piece finding its role within a larger whole. Echoing the principles of Constructivism, Drapaniotou's work treats these forms as articulated structures that function together, constantly shifting in dialogue, where each component contributes to the overall unity.

Drapaniotou's embrace of imperfections infuses her work with a deeply human resonance. By deliberately introducing flaws into her pieces, she brings a sense of vulnerability and authenticity to her ceramics, drawing viewers closer through their shared experience of imperfection. This approach breaks down the barriers often associated with flawless creation, replacing them with a touch of warmth that speaks to the honesty of the artist's hand.

A thread of ritual runs through Drapaniotou's work, connecting her pieces to the long-standing traditions of Greek craftsmanship. Her ceramics serve as vessels of memory, echoing the ancient customs where everyday objects played a central role in communal and spiritual gatherings. Candelabras designed to hold beeswax candles, or vessel forms that invite the act of offering, transform these pieces into contemporary icons of ceremony, honoring the timeless rituals of connection and giving.

Influenced by the rich landscape of Greek culture, Drapaniotou draws inspiration from both nature and architectural forms, weaving these elements into her work. Her pieces reflect the stability of ancient structures while embracing the movement of natural patterns. With a palette of earthy tones and textures that evoke the warmth of the Mediterranean, she creates ceramics that resonate with a sense of place and identity, inviting touch and contemplation.

In her artistic journey, Drapaniotou skillfully combines her techniques and inspirations to create ceramics that tell a story of becoming. Each piece stands as a testament to the enduring qualities of craft and human experience, bridging the past with the present. Through her work, she invites us to find beauty not just in the finished object, but in the act of transformation itself, celebrating the richness of impermanence and the layers of cultural memory.

CATAPHRACTS

Mirka Drapaniotou's Cataphracts series draws upon the powerful imagery of Byzantine cataphracts—heavily armoured cavalrymen whose resilience and discipline were both a physical and mental triumph. These warriors embodied a unique duality: they were protected by armour that fused seamlessly with their bodies, yet they operated within strict limits on the battlefield. Drapaniotou translates this concept into her ceramics, where the inherent vulnerability of clay is tested against the artist's command over the material.

Drapaniotou's technique in Cataphracts is a signature element of her practice. She meticulously forms thin layers of clay, subjecting them to a process she calls "traumatizing the material," pushing the clay to its limits with intentional piercings. These delicate perforations challenge the structural integrity of the ceramic, testing how much it can endure before reaching the brink of collapse. This act of piercing reflects the tension between durability and fragility, mirroring the armour's role as both a shield and a reminder of its wearer's human limitations.

The works themselves are articulated, composed of multiple pieces stacked atop one another in a state of ambivalent balance. This layered arrangement allows each piece to function as part of a larger, transformable entity—an articulated structure that shifts its form while maintaining a sense of precarious stability. Drapaniotou plays with this duality of transformation, creating pieces that seem at once solid and ever-changing.

A fundamental tension in Cataphracts is the exploration of functionality versus dysfunctionality. While these ceramic forms bear the shape of vessels, their pierced surfaces make them impractical for holding liquids. Drapaniotou deliberately challenges this core aspect of ceramic tradition, pushing against the idea that a vessel's purpose is to contain. This series invites viewers to question the limits of function in ceramic art, celebrating the form itself even when its practical use is denied.

The ritualistic aspect of Cataphracts also brings a deeper layer of meaning. These pieces evoke the idea of ceremonial containers, capable of holding or offering food, drink, or symbolic sustenance. Like the cataphracts that protected and carried their own weight, Drapaniotou's works suggest both the act of holding and the paradox of release.

Visually, the textures of Cataphracts blend the essence of metal and leather—echoing the cold, resilient quality of armor and the warm, tactile nature of human skin. This duality of texture plays with contrasts: the hard, durable surface reminiscent of battle-ready armor, and the soft, vulnerable presence of a living being. Through this nuanced approach, Drapaniotou transforms clay into a material that feels both enduring and intimately connected to the human experience.

In Cataphracts, Drapaniotou masterfully fuses strength with sensitivity, discipline with creativity. This body of work is a tribute to the artist's ability to challenge the boundaries of her medium, transforming clay into a vessel of both protection and fragility, permanence and transformation.





Mirka Drapaniotou, *Cataphracts*, 2022-2024
handbuilt stoneware clay, terra sigillata with oxides

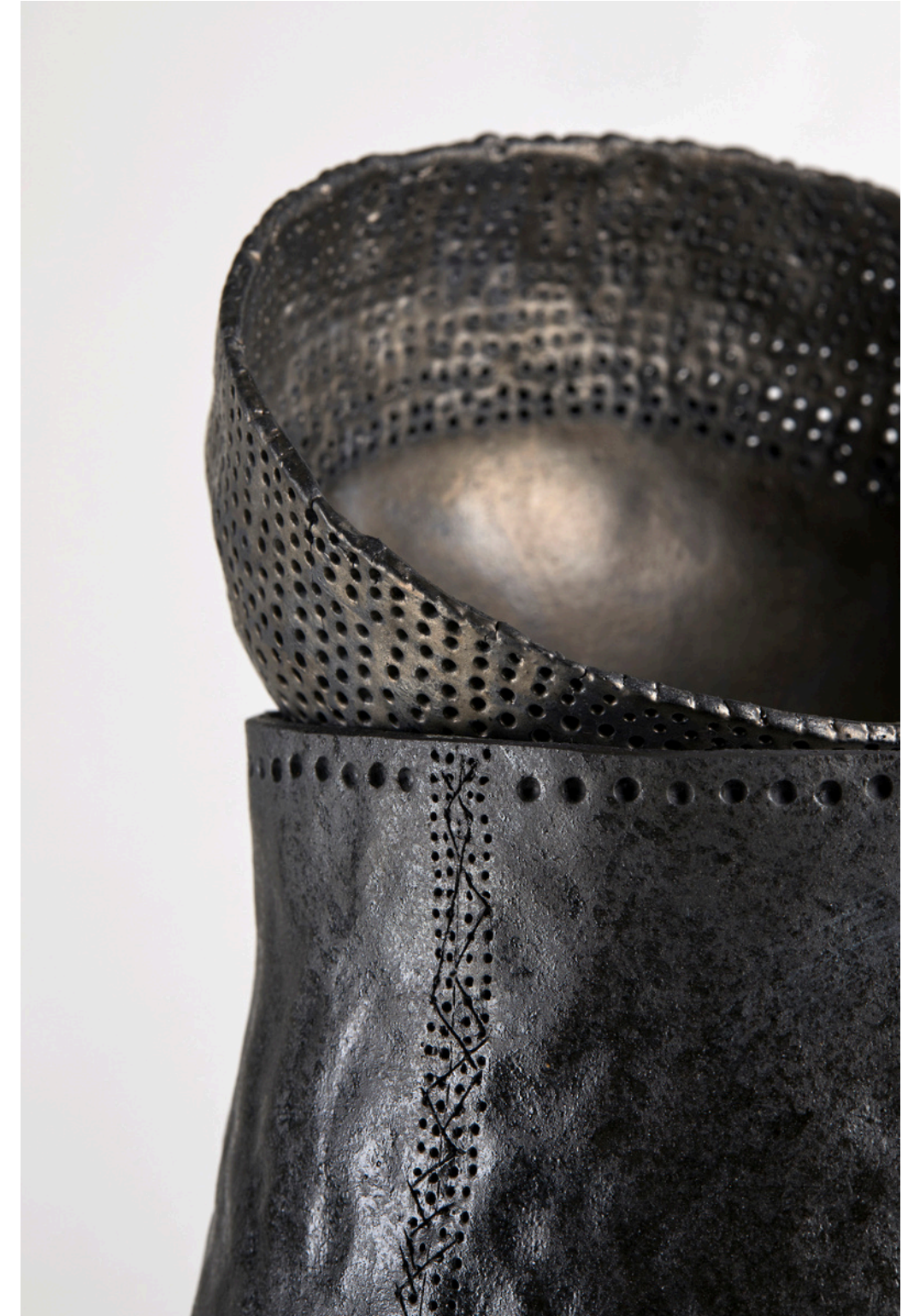
















CV

Education

- Form Design with Nikos Sklavenitis (2015 - 2017)
- Free-Hand Drawing and Chromatics with Irene Koutridou (2012 - 2017)
- Ceramics with Marilena Michopoulou and Menandros Papadopoulos (2013 - 2017)
- Classic Sculpture with Altin Patselis (2014 - 2016)
- Fashion and Costume Design, Athens, Greece (1992 - 2000)

Teaching Experience

- Instructor, Clay Form Sculpture ‘Keramikes Morfes’ (Present)

Seminars & Symposia

- 1st Symposium of Ceramics, Archaeological Museum of Syros, Syros, 2023
- 5-Month Seminar on "High Temperature Glazes" with ceramist George Vavatsis, Athens, 2022
- International Ceramics Symposium, "Approaching Low Temperature", Aegina, 2021
- Alternative Baking Methods (Raku) with Thodoris Galigalidis, Athens, 2018
- Symposium with Ceramist Group Kerameon Ichni, Kalamata, 2018
- Form Development with Rafa Perez, Athens, 2018
- Alternative Baking Methods (Raku) with Theodora Chorafa, Aegina, 2017
- Form Development with Velimir Vukicevic, Patras, 2017
- "Ceramic Decoration - History of Ceramics" by Lia Papailia, at Keramikes Morfes, Athens, 2017

Affiliations

- Founding Member, Art Group TERRACTIVA

Exhibitions

- Biennale of Contemporary Keramics (BCK), Santorini (2024)
- Chimera Culture, "Anama", Syros, 2023
- Archaeological Museum of Syros, "4500 Years Later", Syros, 2023
- Gallery 6 Exi, "Kanata Neru", Thessaloniki, 2022
- Benaki Museum Shop, "Project Mirror", Athens, 2022
- Ceramics Exhibition, "East Meets West (Greek & Catalan Ceramic Art in Paxos)", Paxos, 2022
- Larnaca Biennale, "Limitless Limits", Larnaca, Cyprus, 2021
- Mon Coin Studio, "Aegean", Monastiraki, Athens, 2021
- 6th Ceramics Exhibition, with the Ceramist Group Kerameon Ichni, Archaeological Museum of Olympia, 2021
- Hellenic American Union Gallery, "Melana", Athens, 2021
- 5th Ceramics Exhibition, with Ceramist Group Kerameon Ichni, Agora Argiri, Patras, 2019
- Eleni Marneri Gallery, "Metamorphosis", Athens, 2019
- Ceramics - Sculpture Exhibition, "Equality of Two Genders" with the Ceramist Group Kerameon Ichni, Kalamata, 2018
- MELANITRHOS Gallery, "Clay Stories II - Containing Content", Athens, 2018
- 54th Panhellenic Ceramics Exhibition, Marousi, Athens, 2016
- MELANITRHOS Gallery, "Clay Stories I", Athens, 2016

CONTACT



+30 694 768 6768

WWW.MIRKADRAPANIOTOU.COM

MIRKADRAPANIOTOU@YAHOO.GR