

STUDIO VISIT

Mia Llauder and



Just the Facts

Clay

Mia: porcelain

Joan: porcelain, grogged stoneware, and earthenware

Primary forming method

Mia: slab and coil

Joan: bulk building with addition of materials to clay

Primary firing temperature

gas firing in oxidation to 2012–2372°F (1100–1300°C)

Favorite surface treatment

the natural, naked finish of vitrified clay

Favorite Tool

undoubtedly, the hands

Studio Playlist

usually we have jazz music on in the background

Studio Wishlist

it has everything needed!

Studio

Ceramic artists Joan Serra and Mia Llauder recently bought an isolated, run-down, large property not far from Argentona, a traditional ceramics town just outside of Barcelona, Spain. It's a house that dates as far back as the 13th-century, with which they quickly fell in love, and they have rebuilt it to suit their needs. It has many advantages that their previous space did not: they enjoy the fact that is among fields and forests, but not remote—being just a short drive to Barcelona, and very close to the small town of Argentona. The other big bonus is the large dimensions of the entire compound, which allows them to work without annoying anyone. Their previous studio was in the center of a busy town, and for many years they felt limited by the working space.

The current main building is around 8611 square feet (800 m²), and houses the home, studio, exhibition space, and storehouses for both artists. The studio takes up 5382 square feet (500 m²), so they have lots of room to work together or alone. As for work flow, when designing the studio, natural light and good ventilation were a must, as were good drying spaces for larger works and installation projects, and storage space for multiple bodies of work. At the same time, they believe that the working space doesn't need to be big, but, on the contrary, it is better for each of them to have a cozy, intimate place for creating without nuisances in the way. They have their own separate studio spaces, as well as a common workspace, and the glazing and firing facilities, which may be shared with other artists in the future.

Joan Serra

Barcelona, Spain; by Caterina Roma



Joan has an attic where he keeps all the results of his research in his own orderly manner. It's his private space, where he goes to reflect and find inspiration. Mia, too, has a room of her own, where she develops her small works, and stores the pieces that will later become part of her large installations.

The common area is a 646-square-foot (60 m²) space with lots of natural light, and there they have wheels and a place for modeling and working together. Downstairs is the space for glazing as well as the large gas car kiln for firing. They have also given a primary importance to the storehouse, so they can keep all of the work in perfect order.

Joan and Mia estimate that the entire house project is about 40% completed. In the first phase they rebuilt the main house, and now they have the studio and a smaller gallery complete. The next step will be to make the three studios for the artists in residence. They also want to develop the local area and, in collaboration with nearby folks, to recover the fields. When asked about what they most value about the space, they don't hesitate to answer that the best aspect is having lots of space to work and experiment without limits; their imaginations can fly free in a place designed to meet their own needs.

Among fields and forests, they feel no limitations whatsoever. Their only regret is not having enough time to enjoy it more.

In conceiving the place, they took into account all of the experience gained over the past 30 years. Joan started working in the ceramic industry when he was 14 years old, so he learned every possible solution for large working spaces. Their previous studio was planned in the same manner; they just had to adapt it to the new space and perfect it.

Now that the studio is running smoothly, they have exciting plans to share it with other artists in the near future. The place has some old stables that they want to set up for long-term artists in residence. There will be three different individual working spaces for resident artists. Two of them will also have a small apartment. The property also has other buildings that need to be renovated, so the project is complex, full of possibilities, and Joan and Mia are open to any options and proposals that can add artistic life to the place.

The property, known as Can Caramany, is a dynamic place, and Joan and Mia are often visited by other artists and friends. A formal gallery is still in its early stages and will be developed



into a larger project, but for now it offers them the possibility to show their work in a proper setting to gallery owners, curators, and cultural agents.

Paying Dues (and Bills)

Both Joan and Mia graduated with degrees in the applied arts, with a specialty in ceramics. Their time is split between a ceramic school where they teach three days a week and their own ceramic work, to which they can devote the rest of their time.

The ceramic school they run is part of the Museu del Càntir de Argenton (www.museucantir.org), a museum that is open to the public and has an expansive ceramic water jug collection. It is located in Argenton, which is about 35 minutes outside of Barcelona, along the coast.

Marketing

Since they don't depend on selling their artistic work to pay the bills, they feel totally free to follow their creativity. Still, even if there's not any commercial pressure, they are conscious of the

difficulties and complexities of life as potters, and the only facet they actually dislike about the job is the amount of time that needs to be spent doing non-ceramic activities (like packing, taking pictures, shipping, etc.)

At the moment they do not sell online, but they recognize that it could be a great asset. In order to sell their work, they mostly deal with art galleries, specialty shops, and collectors. Beside their studio there's also an exhibition space where they show and sell their pieces. Selling opportunities have arrived along the way, thanks to the connections they made through curating other artists' exhibitions at the Museu del Càntir de Argenton, competitions, and trips with the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC), among others. They have had long careers devoted to their passion: the art and craft of ceramics.

Most Important Lesson

Joan and Mia have adopted ceramics as a lifestyle. They find inspiration in their own workflow along with visiting museums, exhibitions, and fairs. Just observing life is a source of inspiration



Mia Llauder



Joan Serra



Joan Serra



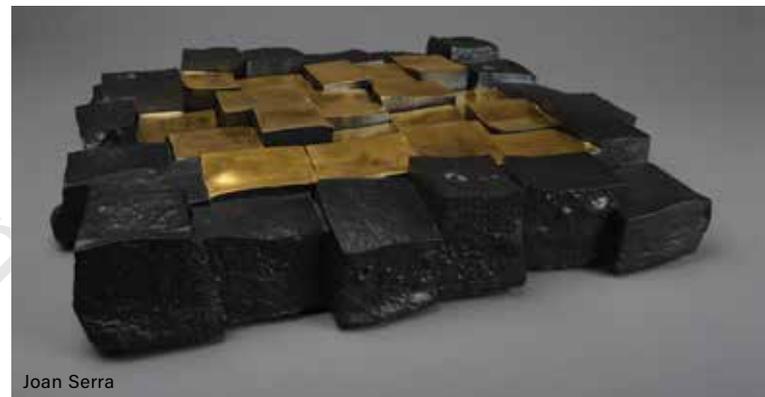
Mia Llauder



Joan Serra



Mia Llauder



Joan Serra

for Mia, who is always thoughtful and meticulous. Joan highlights that he finds inspiration every time he opens the kiln. Quite an accomplishment!

They rarely feel blocked when there's clay in front of them, since there are always more things they want to do and try. They have more they'd like to experiment with than time permits. And, when traveling, they usually visit relevant ceramic sites, drop by to visit friends (many of whom are potters), or participate in ceramic events.

When Joan and Mia take a day off (something that doesn't happen very often), they devote it to renovating the house. Ceramics is not an easy path, they remark, but at the same time, it's a path of freedom. It's a choice and a way of living. And the only thing that is really your own is the work you make, they agree. That is something personal, intimate, unique.

As artists working together for such a long time, they have an unavoidable dialog between their respective artistic worlds. They share results, techniques, and experiences, and work as assistants or advisors for each other when in need. Joan and Mia explain that the other works as a kind of mirror, and the reflection can sometimes

give the answer to whatever question rises up. Even if they do not feel that their artworks have anything in common, Joan and Mia frequently exhibit their work together, and the combination of aesthetics works smoothly.

Advice for Potters

Keep curiosity awake, and analyze what comes out of the kiln every single time.

<http://joan-serra.com>

<http://miallauder.com>

Instagram: [@miallauder](https://www.instagram.com/miallauder)

Gallery websites:

www.galerie-capazza.com/fr

www.simonetheelen.nl

www.ledondufel.com

www.jandehaaskunst.nl

www.pulsceramics.com

www.odematelier.com