

DESIGN

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW

THE ART OF CLAY

Johan Creten is known as the man who broke the boundaries separating contemporary art and clay sculpting. For the past 30 years, the Paris-based Flemish artist has been breaking all the rules with his poetic sculptures, that encourage viewers to delve below the surface to discover their hidden meanings.

"The romantic thing about clay is it's very direct," Johan explains. "It is wet and malleable and you can put all your emotions in there." ▶

“Working with clay is therapeutic and soothing; it makes you calm down. I love the lushness of the material. Then I like the idea also of colour, the glaze, the crystals, the shininess. It's so different from painting, plastics or computers,” he enthuses.

A pioneer in the use of ceramics in contemporary art, he has been transforming clay into a noble art form for the last three decades, while tackling the serious issues of our time, like war, racism, immigration, politics, capitalism, power, human relationships and spirituality through deeply thought-provoking works.

Point of the medium

Creating beauty is his way of unveiling the harshness of the world around him and being able to confront the problems facing humanity without losing hope. Having always broken the rules, his clay sculptures reveal different skins, determined by the glazes used, which crawl, shiver, blister, drip, scar and can be rough and messy – “forbidden things” in classical ceramics.

Once considered unthinkable, the joy of colour and translucency is evident in Johan's clay works. Take for example his golden, yellow, orange and black glazed stoneware *Klein Torso* – part of his series of female torsos covered in individually-crafted ceramic petals

