

# Artists and people who influenced me the most in my artistic career

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As I grow older, I increasingly realize that the central theme of my work - the depiction of the female body - springs from a profound personal need. It is like a sweet obsession.

The qualities of clay itself, the fact that it is malleable and workable in combination to the role of the fire in this process are some of the elements which drew me to ceramics and made me decide at a young age that I wanted to become a ceramist. Both the choice of the material and the central theme of my work so far, have been based on impulse rather than a rational decision. They have emerged instinctively and have had a balancing and comforting effect on my life.

The way in which we develop however, depends not only on who we are and our personal history but also on the possibilities and opportunities that occur to us in our life. In this aspect, I have been lucky. Even though a university level ceramics school does not exist in Greece, I was fortunate to have studied architecture at the university with excellent teachers. It was there that I first studied Art and I am convinced that this school has offered me a valuable aesthetic education.

I also had the opportunity to follow several ceramics courses and to work with talented ceramics artists. The person, however, who has mostly influenced me and had a crucial role in my development is Maro Kerassioti. I first came across her work, which immediately captivated me. Then I had the fortune to meet her in person. From her I learned the main techniques how to work with clay. This happened not only through traditional teaching, but also by watching her working and, later on, by working with her. The way I handle my tools, the - sometimes unconscious - moves of my hands, the way I manipulate the clay have all been considerably influenced by her. Of course, working through the years, each artist develops his own 'language'; it was near Maro, however, that my basis was formed. Furthermore, watching her work closely, seeing how varied and free it is, also changed and widened my perception of ceramics.(foto n 1) I began seeing it from

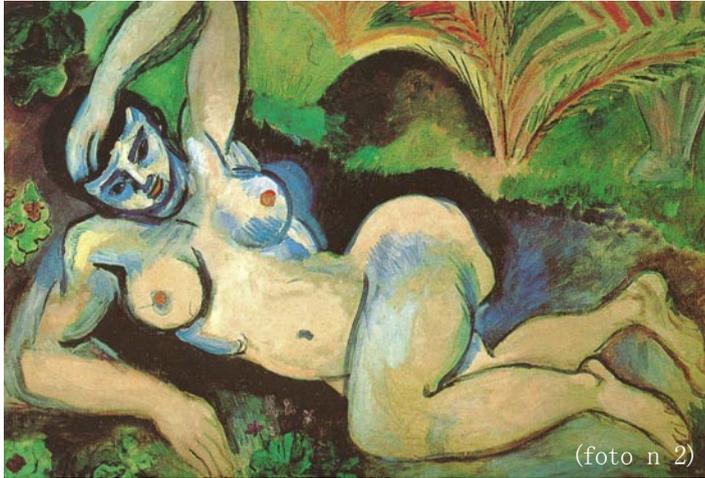
a more artistic point of view. I realized that it offers unlimited possibilities, that it is boundless. I appreciated that, when you become accustomed to clay, when you get to respect and love it, you find out that you can express anything through it. All these have been a strong driving force for me.

At the same time, I have always been attracted to people's preoccupation to depict the human body through art. I am interested to works that, in a realistic or abstract way, portray the human form, or simply imply the human presence.



(foto n 1)

For this reason I study great classic and modern painters, sculptors, and other artists who worked with the human body, particularly the female one. Their names are well-known and countless... Among these great artists I am especially fond of Matisse. I find that the nude female bodies he used to paint and sculpt have incredible softness, 'melody' and harmony. Their curves flow, they have life.(foto n 2) His female forms convey something which for me is the essence of womanhood, a female aura! Sometimes the posture of his sculptures is exaggerated; they appear to have an unrealistic flexibility and this gives them further plasticity.(foto n 3) All these elements are of particular interest to me.

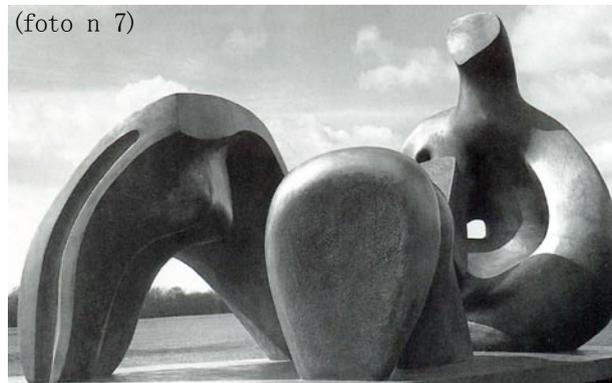


Another great artist I particularly like is Mayolle. I find interesting elements in his work different from the ones I like in Matisse.(foto n 4) His form is dense, his women reveal strength. They are robust yet, at the same time graceful.(foto n 5)



However, more than representing the female body in a realistic way, I am interested in creating curves and forms which follow one another and combine into a harmonious whole. From this

perspective, I have also been intensely influenced by the work of Henry Moore. His sculptures are often simple Doric forms, full of harmony and balance. I was attracted by the strength they convey thanks to this very simplicity.(foto n 6) Thanks to him I realized that the surrounding space of a sculpture works as a whole with the sculpture itself, that the void parts are as important as the full and that the two combine together into an harmonious whole.(foto n 7)

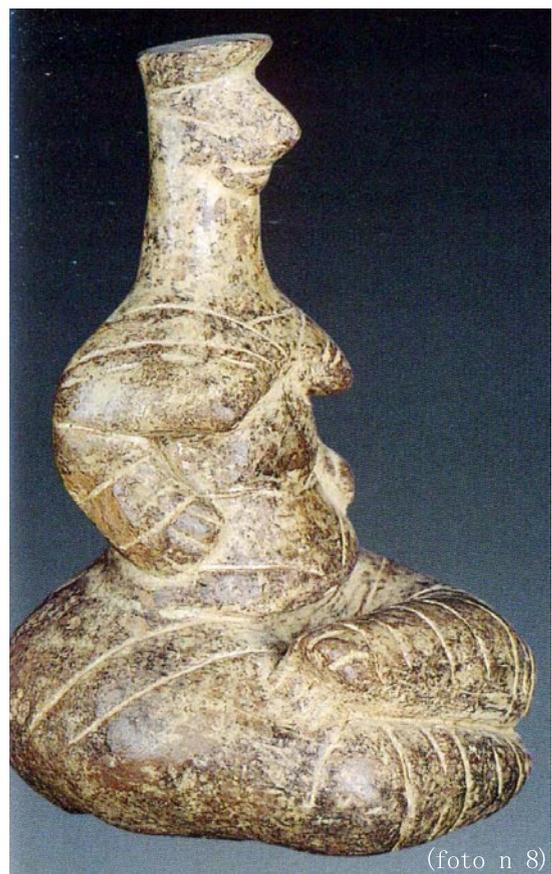


Talking about harmony and balance, it would be impossible not to mention that one of the main sources of inspiration has been nature itself, which I have never stopped observing. Amazing forms, some graceful and some more Doric, full of balance, exist everywhere in nature. Clouds, mountains, rocks carved by the sea, trees, shapes created on the sand. On a smaller scale, fruits, flowers, animals, anything can be a source of inspiration. Indeed, man is also a part of this whole, a part of nature.

I would also like to mention that another fact which held an important role in the development of my work is my Greek origin. The portrayal of the female figure in the geographic area where Greece lies today goes back to prehistory. The Neolithic idols with their strongly exaggerated female features (belly, hips and breasts) have had a strong influence on my work. Apart from the powerful representation of the female form, these figurines wonderfully illustrate the creation, and life's capacity for renewal and perpetuation. They are matriarches and fertility goddesses, symbols of the eternal circle of life.(foto n 8) As I wanted to express a universal rather than a limited personal image, I felt close to the impersonal character of those primitive statuettes. They refuse to focus on the description of an individual, keeping the imaginary features of an archetype. It is amazing that 6,000 years later these forms "speak" to me.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors that have been crucial in shaping my artistic personality, I try to keep up with contemporary, less prominent ceramics artists who express themselves in a figurative way.

Dang Jung, for instance, even though he creates male forms in clothes, has attracted my interest with the



movements and the fragile balance of his forms since sometimes deliberately I give to my works intense movement and fragile balance, in order to make them look as if they are ready to 'go'. I want to give the impression that time and movement stand still for a while.

I also like the work of Taiwanese ceramics artist Shao Ting Ju. The way she forms installations with her figures, and plays with scale combining living creatures and objects in unrealistic sizes. These are elements that inspire me to promote and develop my work.

Finally, I would like to mention the symposiums that I had the fortune to attend. The opportunity to work and share experience with ceramics artists from all over the world, each of whom carries his own culture and unique way of handling their material, has been priceless. Even if the results are not immediately visible, I feel that this has made me move forward and has widened my horizons and the way I see and think about ceramics.

(foto n 9)

