

Stratigraphy of Matter and Spirit // Hannah Neiger

Curator: Nitza Cohen Mohr

"It has been here since the Earth was formed. For many millions of years, it has circled the globe. Flying in the wind, sinking into lakes, drifting in rivers, sinking into seas. Returning repeatedly. It has likely wandered to every place on the face of the earth. To me it is a wonder that one can touch material from the very beginning of creation. Material without which there is no life - earth and water. From this material we were created. We contain the same elements it does, but we also have movement, breath, pulse, life." Hannah Neiger

Hannah Neiger has been a ceramicist for over fifty years. She sees the gap, the space between two trees, the air inside a vessel that pushes against its walls and creates a container. For her, the objects that emerge under her hands are not hers, they are borrowed from nature. She builds them and sends them onward.

Neiger creates and teaches, and it seems as though from the very start of her path she has never paused for a moment. Entering her studio means entering a space of active making. Works by her students stand alongside her own. In the 1970s, Neiger studied at Oranim collage under the ceramic artist Hanna Charag-Zuntz. To her, Zuntz, whose modesty remained a guiding light, was like earth itself. From her, Neiger acquired respect for the process and the strength of persistence. Clay, for her, is part of her own body. She knows it, meets it, and engages in a constant inquiry into it and her relationship with it. Form, materiality, texture, balance, contrast, and the conflicts the material raises, interest and intrigue her. "Only endless patience yields immediate results," says Neiger, who feels a deep connection to Buddhist philosophy. She works slowly and meticulously, like a gentle yet unending flow of a bubbling spring turning into a soft stream. Every step is deliberate, and when things begin to move on their own, she stops and observes.

As a teacher and art therapist, she seeks to share the vast knowledge she has accumulated. Over the years she has taught children, teens facing mental health challenges, and adults. She sees clay as a therapeutic material, working with it can lead to an encounter with the self. It is pliable, and when it dries, crumbles, or breaks, it can be recycled and begun anew. For her, it is a tool for discourse about the human being, about the soul.

This exhibition presents works by Neiger from 2021 to the present. With courage and curiosity, she tests combinations of materials and techniques. The tiles on display reflect a sculptural experiment that seems to testify to the complexity and playfulness of the person creating them. The spheres, bottles, and bowls are all part of her dialogue with space, with emptiness. She works in layers, in strata, searching for what lies beneath the cracks. Within this process she encounters disappointments, joys, and pride, and at the end of it all, an object emerges that embodies her spirit within the material. In a world where immediacy, unpredictability, and constant change are part of our daily lives, her deep, long-standing connection to material research and her spiritual perceptions create a fascinating and unique world.

