
Memory of materials

The Memory of Materials exhibition aims to revive the past by displaying pieces of furniture found in the abandoned building alongside a series of monotypes, creating a nostalgic atmosphere further amplified by the 24 photos depicting the experimental interventions made by students. The direct interaction with the structure serves as the leitmotif, offering a sensory experience that combines strength and refinement. Traditional Romanian motifs painted in a decorative style are harmoniously blended with visual structures that coherently maintain the identity narrative of the visual discourse

Mexican artists; artist in residence; experimental art; ceramics; painting; exhibition

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Introduction

During their residence in Iași, artists Kees Ouwens and Carmen Jacobo impressively crafted two captivating installations, alongside photography and monotype exhibitions showcased at *apARTe* Gallery on December 19, 2023.

Emerging in the 1960s, installation art has become a vital component of modern art, characterized by three-dimensional works that fill an

entire room or gallery, allowing viewers to walk around and engage deeply with the artist's vision. This immersive experience can create a profound psychological impact due to the size and presence of the installations. Pioneers like Allan Kaprow and Kurt Schwitters laid the groundwork for this art movement.

Typically made from diverse materials—such as cardboard, wood, metal, and even found objects—installations may incorporate light and sound, enhancing the message the artist wishes to convey. The essence of installation art lies in the interplay between the artwork, its environment, and the audience, fostering a unique atmosphere that blends elements of sculpture and scenography in a non-traditional sense (Tate, 2024).

1. Ceramics workshop

Kees Ouwens, originally from Holland, and Carmen Jacobo, born in Mexico, are two visual artists currently residing in Presa de Umecuar, Morelia, Mexico, where they manage *La Coyotera Taller Estudio* Art Residency (Ouwens 2024c). Kees Ouwens is a painter and a sculptor specializing in stone and marble, with his works having been exhibited in the United States, South Korea, Germany, and Japan (Ouwens 2024b). Carmen Jacobo is a painter, ceramic artist, and installation artist (Jacobo Iturbide 2024a). She participated in a landscape intervention at the Festival Arte de la



Fig. 1. Kees Ouwens, *Landscape*
(Carved and Cut Stone Contemporary
statue) 15 × 30 × 65 cm



Fig. 2. Carmen Jacobo,
encaustics, 30 × 30 cm

Tierra 2013, held at the O-Huis studio in Seiyo, Japan, where she experimented with Japanese glazes.

Kees and Carmen took part in December 2023, in *UNAGE Iași Art Residency*, organized by the *Painting – Contemporary Visual Practices Cultural Center*, coordinated by our Painting Department at the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, *George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași* (ResArtis 2024). Their project was financially supported by the *Erasmus+* international program. During their three-week stay, Kees and Carmen's complex body of work included several activities, likes: a ceramics installation, a ceramics workshop, art interventions in an abandoned building, the exhibition itself and an artist talk.

1.1 Studio work-in-progress

Carmen Jacobo, in collaboration with students from the Ceramics Department, created a modular ceramics installation consisting of approximately 1,500 small rectangular pieces, each fired in a kiln and bound with string. Notably, each piece was individualized by incorporating words or creating specific chromatic structures.



Fig. 3, 4. Carmen Jacobo working in the studio at the ceramics pieces together with the students from Ceramics Department, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Iași

This project was made possible under the coordination of Assistant Professor and visual artist Ramona Biciușcă.

1.2 Ceramics workshop; burning ceramics pieces in Mexican style

The two visual artists organized a ceramics workshop for the Ceramics and Painting Departments, facilitated by Miss Felicia Balan, the representative of the *Erasmus+* international program, which provided an appropriate venue for this event. The ceramic pieces were placed in a hole dug in the ground, covered with burning coal and sealed with a metal lid. After a few hours, the pieces were extracted using pliers and placed on a support. In the initial moments before cooling, lines were drawn on the surface with a wooden stick, customizing each piece and giving it a unique identity.



Fig. 5, 6. Kees Ouwens and Carmen Jacobo burning ceramics pieces in Mexican style together with the students from Ceramics Department, Horlești

2. Public art interventions

Another intriguing project undertaken by the two Mexican artists-in-residence took place in an abandoned building on Ghica-Vodă Street,

primarily involving students from the Painting Department. The building, once owned by Costache Corjescu—a prominent farmer and initiator of the *League for the Defense of the Rights of Moldova*—was on the verge of collapse after being abandoned for an extended period. It had previously been part of the *Leon Ghelester* Sanatorium. After 1909, the property was acquired by *Fraterna Israelita* Society from Păcurari, a Jewish community and philanthropic foundation that initiated and supported the Israeli Hospital in Iași, established in 1875. This historical information was provided by Mr. Marius Checu from *A.D. Xenopol* History Institute. The approval for using the building was granted by architect Gabriel Etcu, founder of ESQ Village, a company specializing in the construction of residential complexes.





Fig. 7, 8, 9. Artists doing experimental art interventions together with the students from Painting and Ceramics Department, in the abandoned building located on Ghica-Vodă street, Iași

This activity involved several interventions, including painting some of the building's walls, windows, and doors, and exhibiting a photography collage in one of the rooms. Various old objects were gathered and arranged coherently to reflect the history of the house. Light bulb installations were integrated into parts of the walls to explore the transparency and reflection of light on surfaces and door windows. Charcoal drawings were created by a student on some wall edges, while Kees constructed a large wooden installation placed in the center of one of the rooms. Carmen crafted a circular shape from several pieces of glass found on the floor. Additionally, Kees produced a few monotypes by painting with oil colors on some of the old door windows and imprinting papers, which were then framed and exhibited in the gallery. Students used acrylics and industrial paints to freely engage with the space, revaluing and reconsidering it from a new perspective. All these actions were meticulously documented through professional photography, and local television was invited to conduct interviews

with the artists-in-residence and several students. Students from the Ceramics Department also placed small ceramic pieces, such as crosses and pots, in the building's walls to express personal meanings or beliefs.

Overall, this experience was highly positive as it allowed students to explore new approaches, engage in experimental actions, and step out of their comfort zones. It was about leaving a mark in a new place, getting to know it, and feeling its unique energy.

3. Final product - exhibition

On December 19th, the *apARTe* Gallery hosted the opening of the exhibition titled *Memory of Materials*, notable for its complexity. Upon entering the gallery, visitors first encounter a series of photographs on the left side, followed by some chromatic interventions and monotypes on the adjacent wall.





Fig. 10, 11, and 12 (opposite page). *Memory of materials* exhibition at apARTE Gallery, December 19th 2023, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Iași. (ceramics installation, old found objects installation, wall painting and photography)

The gallery space was organized into two sections: on the left, a ceramics installation created by Carmen Jacobo and the students under the guidance of Assistant Lecturer Ramona Biciușcă; and on the right, an installation composed of old found objects by Kees Ouwers.

Memoria de los materiales

artişti vizuali

KEES OUWENS
CARMEN JACOBO
(MEXIC)

Galeria Aparte
Str. Oodrescu nr. 6

vernisaaj
marţi, 19 decembrie 2023, ora 18

proiect prezentat de
Prof. univ. dr. Cristian Ungureanu

Coordonatori:
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Asist. univ. dr. Andrei Timofte
Asistentă tehnică Ricu Oniciuc

Eveniment organizat de:
Asist. univ. dr. Ioana Palanar
în colaborare cu Lector univ. dr. Ramona Biciuşcă

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Andreea Dorcu
Dana Dancu
Diana Mădălina
Valentina Juvare
Bianca Murgu
Marcela Ruffei
Anastasia-Iulian Popa
Andrei Roman

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Elona Bican
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Cristina Dorcu (Ispas)
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Alina Păun
Anabela Alina Păun
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Sterea Violeta Salist
Andreea Dorcu
Dana Dancu
Diana Mădălina
Valentina Juvare
Bianca Murgu
Marcela Ruffei
Anastasia-Iulian Popa
Andrei Roman

Specializarea Sculptura:

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Iliescu Alina
Sterea Violeta Salist
Andreea Dorcu
Dana Dancu
Diana Mădălina
Valentina Juvare
Bianca Murgu
Marcela Ruffei
Anastasia-Iulian Popa
Andrei Roman




windows and resemble abstract paintings. The ceramic installation achieved a dynamic quality through its floor display; some ceramic pieces were elevated on pedestals of varying heights, gradually decreasing until they reached floor level. These pieces were arranged in two strips of differing lengths and forms, creating a balanced overall installation. Kees's installation consisted of old furniture pieces, such as: a scale, a metal grill, a curtain, a few glass bottles, a door frame, some wires, and various other objects believed to be part of Israelite tradition. These objects were harmoniously combined, forming a cohesive whole despite their differences as for: form, materiality, color, and utility, as if they have always belonged together.



Fig. 13, 14. Kees Ouwens and Carmen Jacobo having an open-talk for the students from Painting and Ceramics Departments, December 2023, room no.11, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Iași

In the end, various visual art forms—ceramics, painting, installation, and photography—were successfully harmonized, coming together like a grand final product composed of numerous smaller creations resulting from the previously mentioned actions.

4. Artist talk

Kees Ouwers and Carmen Jacobo shared their experiences as visual artists with students from the Ceramics and Painting Department-

ments by organizing an open talk at the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design. The session was based on a presentation of their art projects. Kees showcased several sculpture projects primarily organized in Japan, where he lived for 33 years before deciding to move to Mexico (Ouwers 2024a). There, he continued to reevaluate his artworks, drawing inspiration from a completely different cultural and geographical environment. Carmen presented her projects related to the workshops she organized with artists in residence, which she hosted alongside Kees as part of their long-running art residency program (Ouwers & Jacobo 2024). She also discussed her art experiments, installations created in nature, and various other endeavors (Jacobo Iturbide 2024b). The presentation captivated the students' attention, prompting them to ask questions and find the open talk highly useful and inspirational for their future projects.

Conclusions

The collaboration with Kees and Carmen was exceptionally fruitful. Firstly, they brought a wealth of inspiring experiences not only as artists but also as individuals. Secondly, they organized several complex activities with our students during their short stay. Collaborations with foreign artists are highly important, as they allow both students and teachers to broaden their cultural horizons. This can lead to more opportunities for travel and collaboration with other artists, which is essential for our development as artists. Taking risks and stepping out of our comfort zones by engaging with different cultures and perspectives is invaluable.

Author Contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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