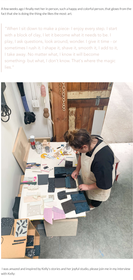
A STUDIO VISIT TO KELLY CARÁMBULA

This first time I came across Kelly Carámbula's work, a fan! from her Instagram and subsidiary, was back in 2018. It was in one of the Swarm galleries in the city. Instagram. I immediately fell in love with her ceramic collages, the vibrant yet serene language of color, and texture. Allow me to the very first blog ever. It's really nice to see the evolution of her work from that first exhibition to the work she does today.

A few weeks ago I finally met her in person, such a happy and colorful person, that glows from the fact that she is doing the thing she likes the most: art.

> "When I sit down to make a piece I enjoy every step. I start with a block of clay, I let it become what it needs to be. I pick, I ask questions, look around, wonder, I give it time or sometimes I rush it. I shape it, shave it, smooth it, I add to it, I take away. No matter what, I know it will become something. But what, I don't know. That's where the magic lies."



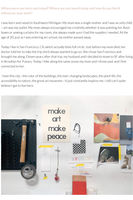
I was amazed and inspiring by Kelly's ceramic and her pitch studio, please join me in my interview with Kelly.

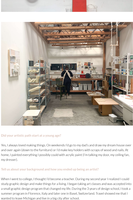
Where were you born and raised? Where are you based today and how do you like it? Influences over there?

I was born and raised in Southwest Michigan. My mom was a single mother and I was an only child. We moved around a lot, I attended 13 different schools before I graduated high school. I had been in seeing cracks for my mom, she always made sure I had the supplies needed. By the age of 20, just as I was entering art school, my mother passed away.

Today I live in San Francisco, CA, which actually feels full circle. Just before my mom died, her doctor told her to take the trip she'd always wanted to go on. She chose San Francisco and I remember being so mad at her for not choosing Paris or Italy or something more exotic. I'm glad I'm living in Brooklyn for 4 years. Today, I feel, always felt, the same as you my mom and I'm sure you did too! I connected to her.

I have this city – the vibe of the buildings, the ever-changing landscapes, the plant life, the accessibility to nature, the great art museums – it just constantly inspires me. I still can't quite believe I get to be here.





Did know artists until round of screening age?

No, I always loved painting & things. I'm seventeen, I'd go to the dollar store and draw on discount house cows and cover again (drawn in the furniture) or I'd make my lockers with a copy of Monet and walls. My teachers loved that everything I carefully crawled with acrylic paint! I'm talking my locker, my cubicle, my desk.

Did you always come background and how you ended up taking an artist?

When I went to college, I thought I'd become a teacher. Crying my second year I realized I could change grades, drop classes and change my major. Sitting in my art classes and was so overwhelmed by the joy I felt, I knew I was in the right place. My first painting class I actually signed up for a ceramic class on the terrace. Sun and water. Love in black. Switched. Ceramics was the thing I started to explore in Michigan and then in city by after school.

My three-level kindness husband (whom I met in art school) and I moved to Brooklyn after graduation and began working in branding and design. I loss your interested in food and I'd like to start a blog (back when food blogs were a novel thing) and I eventually founded a food company. Food was my thing, I thought. I'd been cooking since I was a kid and I was a food ambassador, a raw vitamin junkie, and I'd been raised on Mexican food. Food was the thing I started to explore in Michigan and then in city by after school.

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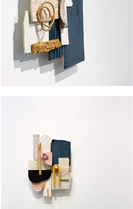
Upskilled Remedy Quarterly for 4 years, but after having my second child, I came to the realization that I'd lost my passion for my magazine and it was time to move on. It took some time, but I eventually left the company. I'd been dabbling in ceramics on the side, but I didn't know what I was. I chose "Off-Duty of artist and Mom". I started with 12 sessions of collage while my kids napped. Making art again lit me up inside – I had been College Kelly's day and sweaterwaiting and I knew I was on the right path. I'd been dabbling in ceramics on the side, but I didn't know what I was. Sitting at a bit is what I was meant to do. The seeds I'm creating right now feels like the ripest I've ever been to myself, which makes me very happy.



Where are the influences and inspiration?

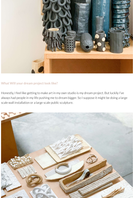
I love the work of the Czech Beach Gallery, Sheila Hicks, Sister Corita Kent, Joan Mitchell, Ellsworth Kelly, and Ruth Asawa. I also love the artwork coming out of Creative Crowdin in Indianapolis and my top 10 – both have a sense of freedom that I'm always trying to capture in my work.

What's your day-to-day process look like and what's your favorite part?

Since clay has so many processes, there are many opportunities for creativity. With my current process, I start with a piece of clay and I let it become what it needs to be. I pick, I ask questions, I open a bag of clay and simply make and play and experiment. The clay dries a bit and I'll sketch and fix it. After this first pick-from-it, I carve my clay pieces (either collage or bowls) and then bisque fire them. I'm a big fan of the bisque fire. I love the color it brings out in the clay and I love how it slips collages on top of my bowls. I love my bisque fire because it allows me to see what the final piece will look like (after glaze and size). What I love about this process is that I can fully trust my gut and know that all of these pieces with their quirks and flaws and bumps will turn into something wonderful.

What WIP (in or known projects) look like?

Honestly, I feel like getting to make art in my own studio is my dream project. But a lady I'm working with in Indianapolis is asking me to make 5 collages. So I suppose I might be doing a large scale wall installation or a large scale sculpture.



Thank you Kelly for sharing your exciting story with us. In the beginning of my visit we talked about mothehood and I really connected to your words as a mother and a maker myself.

> "Can something be hard and cozy at the same time? surprising like motherhood.... I think Motherhood made me a better artist. It shook up everything in my life, made me see with different eyes. It showed me I had to dive into what makes me feel alive and true to myself".

Kelly's current body of work is inspired by her experience with motherhood, she has two upcoming exhibitions, one in Healdsburg, CA and the other in San Francisco, so if you're around, mark your calendars:

Legion Projects on April 2, 2022

Eleanor Harwood Gallery on June 4-July 16, 2022

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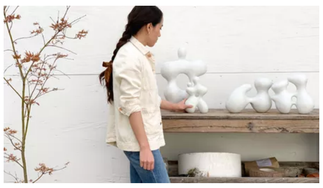

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