

OTIS

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Untitled Bowl, 2007, Ceramic, 18.5 x 22 x 22", Collection of Douglas Moreland, Los Angeles

Otis College of Art and Design's Ben Maltz Gallery is pleased to present:

Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty

*The first retrospective to document the eye-dazzling ceramics created by Ralph Bacerra (1938–2008)
On view September 26 – December 6, 2015*

LOS ANGELES, CA – July, 2015 – The Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design is pleased to present **Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty**, the first retrospective to document the eye-dazzling ceramics created by **Ralph Bacerra** (1938–2008), a Los Angeles–based artist known for his innovative approach to surface embellishment. Curated by **Jo Lauria**, the exhibition features more than ninety of the artist's finest pieces—dramatic, highly decorated vessels and sculptures that have never before been the focus of a major exhibition. The exhibition opens on Saturday, September 26, 2015 and is on view through December 6, 2015. An opening reception takes place Saturday, September 26, 2015, 4pm-6pm.

Bacerra's career in ceramics spanned five decades, over the course of which his work moved stylistically from traditionalism to pattern and decoration to "post-baroque." He was part of the group of second-generation post–World War II California artists who followed the boundary-expanding lead of **Robert Arneson, Viola Frey, John Mason, Ken Price, and Peter Voulkos**. These visionary artists sought to use clay in a way that responded to their time and place. Collectively they broadened the possibilities of the medium and brought recognition to the field.

Like those before him, Bacerra regularly challenged ceramic conventions, resolutely experimenting with unfamiliar materials and techniques in his studio. His unique contribution was the creation of a new "grammar of ornament" through the complex layering of aggregated design motifs, achieved primarily through multiple applications of underglazes and overglazes combined with metallic lusters. The resultant interweave generated a language rich in cross-cultural inflection and design schemes fluent in optically inventive patterns that played with perception and teased the eye.

In addition to achieving artistic excellence in the studio, Bacerra was a passionate and effective teacher in the classroom. He served as the head of ceramics at **Chouinard** from 1964 through 1971, when the school was formally absorbed by the California Institute of the Arts and the ceramics major eliminated from the curriculum. The second phase of Bacerra's teaching career began in 1982 at the invitation of **Otis Art Institute**. The first year he taught part-time, leading classes in Surface Design and Glaze Technology.

The following year he was appointed chair of ceramics with oversight of all aspects of the ceramics studio. He held the position for thirteen years, teaching a new generation of students the skills to become successful studio artists and educators. All who spent time in his classroom benefited from his technical expertise and keen design sensibility. Many former students from both Chouinard and Otis have ascended to prominence in the ceramics field and have contributed to its vitality.

A 150 page, full color catalogue will be published in September 2015 in conjunction with *Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty*, featuring essays by Jeannine Falino, Hollis Goodall, Christy Johnson, and Jo Lauria.

The Ralph Bacerra Tribute Page at www.otis.edu/ben-maltz-gallery/ralph-bacerra-tribute hosts more information about Ralph Bacerra as well as the video *Art is What I Do: The Life of Ralph Bacerra*, a film by Jo Lauria, produced by The Boardman Family Foundation in cooperation with Otis.

Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty is curated by Jo Lauria, Independent Decorative Arts Curator and Scholar and funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Pasadena Art Alliance, The Boardman Family Foundation, Friends of Contemporary Ceramics, and by the generosity of many individuals.

Related Exhibitions in Los Angeles

Crossroads in Clay at Chouinard and Otis: The Ralph Bacerra Years, a group exhibition featuring the work of more than thirty former students of Ralph Bacerra, curated by Christy Johnson. On view September 19 - December 5, 2015 at The Vincent Price Art Museum on the campus of East Los Angeles College.

Exhibition Programming:

Opening Reception

Saturday, September 26, 2015, 4-6pm, Free

Symposium

Sunday, September 27, 2pm, Free

Centered on Clay a symposium with keynote speaker Kathy Butterly
East Los Angeles College

Artist Studio Tours

Tour I: Saturday, October 24 | Tour II: Saturday, November 14 | 10am-5pm, \$25

Clay Rolling Bus Tours, includes a private tour of *Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty* with the curator and gallery director, followed by visits to various Otis alumni studios and venues in West Los Angeles and Pasadena, including **Anna Silver, Robert Miller, Leslie Rosdol, Sue Keane, Porntip Sangvanich, Peter Shire, Joan Takayama-Ogawa, Pacific Asia Museum**, as well as other "surprise" artists who will "pop-up" with their work along the way.

To register: www.otis.edu/ce | 310.665.6950 | Oct 24: Reg #35459 | Nov 14: Reg #35460

Location: Otis College of Art and Design, 9045 Lincoln Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90045

Admission and Parking: Free. Visitor parking in structure on La Tijera.

Hours: Tue-Sat 10am-5pm / Thu 10am-7pm / Sat-Sun 12-4pm / Closed Nov 25-30

Gallery Info: 310.665.6905, gallerinfo@otis.edu, www.otis.edu/benmaltzgallery

More Otis Events: www.otis.edu/calendar



Top L-R: *Untitled Gold Vessel*, 2001, Earthenware, 31 ½ x 22 x 22 inches, Collection of Peter and Cindy Bass | Cindy Lee Bass, Executor of the Ralph Bacerra Estate; *Untitled Lidded Vessel*, 1998, Earthenware, 29 x 17 ½ x 16 inches, Collection of David Armstrong, Pomona, CA. Bottom L-R: *Untitled Platter*, 2007, Ceramic 4 x 28 ¼ x 28 ¼ inches, Collection of Peter and Cindy Bass | Cindy Lee Bass, Executor of the Ralph Bacerra Estate; *Untitled*, 1998, Porcelain, 15 ½ x 19 ½ x 17 ⅝ inches, Collection of Forrest L. Merrill, Berkeley, CA.

About Otis: Founded in Los Angeles in 1918, Otis College of Art and Design prepares diverse students of art and design to enrich the world through their creativity, their skill, and their vision. The College offers an interdisciplinary education for 1200 full-time students, awarding BFA degrees in Advertising, Architecture/Landscape/Interiors, Digital Media, Fashion Design, Illustration, Graphic Design, Product Design, Painting, Photography, Sculpture/New Genres, and Toy Design; and MFA degrees in Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Public Practice, and Writing. Continuing Education offers certificate programs as well as personal and professional development courses. Additional information is available at www.otis.edu

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