



# EX-tend EX-cess

METAMORPHOSIS IN CLAY

EX-**TE**ND  
ST**EP**S

METAMORPHOSIS  
IN CLAY

Center for the Arts Gallery, Towson University  
August 26 – December 10, 2022





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Sagi Refael, Author

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FOREWORD .....	Erin Lehman	1
ESSAYS .....		3
<i>EX-tend EX-cess in Context</i> .....	J. Susan Isaacs	4
What remains after the body is gone?.....	Sagi Refael	8
For Dust Thou Art and Unto Dust Shall Thou Return.....	Sagi Refael	9
THE ARTISTS .....		11
EBITENYEFA BARALAYE .....		12
CASSILS .....		18
ROXANNE JACKSON.....		22
SARA PARENT-RAMOS .....		27
ZEMER PELED .....		32
ROTEM RESHEF .....		38
MARTHA RIEGER .....		44
BRIE RUAIS.....		47
ANTHONY SONNENBERG.....		53
GABRIELA VAINSENER.....		60
MICHAEL WARE .....		69
MATT WEDEL .....		78
SHIYUAN XU .....		83

# EX-CESS

## METAMORPHOSIS IN CLAY

## Foreword

*EX-tend EX-cess: Metamorphosis in Clay* was indeed a metamorphosis, one that began as a tension between the desire to create something that highlighted ceramics and a disinterest in a traditional vessel-focused exhibition. In their collaborations, co-curators J. Susan Isaacs and Sagi Refael produced something that was both basic—a fundamental celebration of the possibilities of clay—and theoretical, almost esoteric—what, in the hands of these artists, are the limits of this material that so often we see as utilitarian, but can, it turns out, become literal extensions of bodies and souls, continuously pushing beyond assumed boundaries both inwards and outwards.

The exhibition itself was visually stunning, as breathtaking in its artistic strength as it was fragile in its physical form, and like the clay itself seemed to live and breathe, extending its reach and affecting many. Students, alumni, and the public saw the work in person, heard the artists lecture on their process or dug into the clay with them in workshops, and gained experience working directly with the artists in the gallery. It was reviewed and later chosen by *BmoreArt* as one of the top ten Baltimore Art Exhibits of 2022.\*

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Erin Lehman, PhD  
Director of the Department of Art + Design, Art History, Art Education Galleries  
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\* "BmoreArt's Ten Best Baltimore Exhibits of 2022 Ten Baltimore Art Exhibits in 2022 that Made us Reevaluate Our Priorities," *BmoreArt*, December 30, 2022. <https://bmoreart.com/2022/12/bmorearts-ten-best-baltimore-exhibits-of-2022.html>

Fanni Somogyi, "Excess and Access: Contemporary Ceramics at Towson University," *BmoreArt*, October 5, 2022. <https://bmoreart.com/2022/10/excess-and-access-contemporary-ceramics-at-towson-university.html>

## ROTEM RESHEF

*I think art in general and these immersive installations open the mind to a new way of looking. So, it's not only by shouting but it's by engaging people through the art which I believe, I hope, can really make a difference.*<sup>38</sup>

*Terra Incognita* (Unknown Land in Latin), Rotem Reshef's first exploration into the world of ceramic arts, was created specifically for this exhibition. Continuing on with previous ideas that had been explored in a body of work titled *Habitat* (2019-2020), Reshef stresses the delicate balance between existing on this earth and the danger of disappearance.

An action painter and installation artist, Reshef has been working around ideas of remembrance, healing, correction, and engagement with nature by imprinting different organic and inorganic materials onto her canvases. She takes relics from her surrounding environments and fossilizes them onto surfaces that accept their textures, giving a second chance to materials and objects that existed but were overlooked, dismissed or forgotten by society. In a world that is constantly craving the newest thing, Reshef is drawn to what is being taken for granted, whether it is vegetation waste removed from the urban landscape or natural habitats that are seen as a background for human living. She embraces forms of existence that are the detritus or backdrop of consumption, and by treating them more compassionately, she gives them a new cycle of life as part of a work of art.

In *Terra Incognita*, Reshef combines a painted scroll with three stripes of ceramic tiles, imprinted with different vegetation and flora. The vertical scroll carries the memory of bodily forms floating on the surface of the canvas, layered with traces of flora and imprints of clothing items that ascend up into the suggested heavens. On the floor, three channels emerge from the canvas, suggesting roots connecting to the ground or streams of water springing organically from the painting. She connects the natural world to human existence, recognizing the ancient relationship between the two. At a time of global warming and climate change, the result of capitalist exploitation of nature by mankind, Reshef reminds us of a fading human existence when compared to the eternal existence of planet earth.

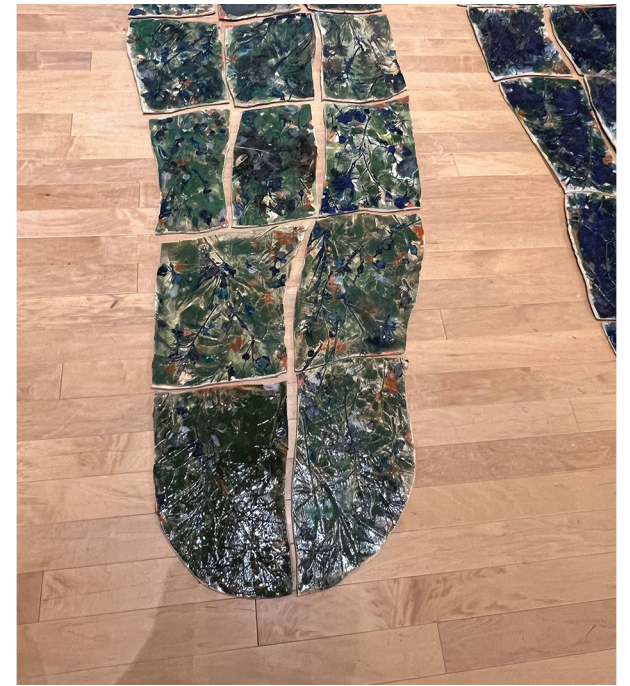
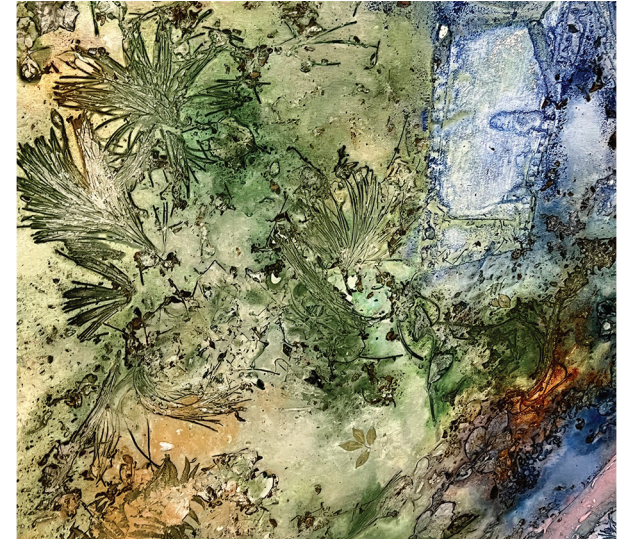
Inspired by Ecofeminism, she suggests mending what has been broken without trying to conceal its fragile past, and reminds us that these two forms of horizontal and vertical coexistence—the human and the ground on which we walk—are out of balance and that in the end, nature may absorb all of us.<sup>39</sup>



Rotem Reshef, *Terra Incognita*, 2022. Ceramic, mixed media on canvas. Photograph by Human Kindness Productions.



Rotem Reshef installing *Terra Incognita*, 2022.



Rotem Reshef, *Terra Incognita*, tile detail, 2022. Photographs by Avi Amsalem.



Rotem Reshef, *Terra Incognita*, detail, 2022. Ceramic, mixed media on canvas. Photograph by Human Kindness Productions.



Rotem Reshef, *Terra Incognita*, detail, 2022. Ceramic, mixed media on canvas. Photograph by Human Kindness Productions.

**Rotem Reshef** is a painter and installation artist based in New York City and Tel Aviv. Her works deal with traces of human presence and the appearance and disappearance of it in nature, as in the tradition of *Nature Morte*. Among the themes in her work are Ecofeminism, healing, and remembrance. Reshef is a graduate of HaMidrasha, Beit Berl Academic College, Israel and holds a master's degree from Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Reshef was a recipient of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Israel Ministry of Culture scholarships and was an artist in residence at NARS Foundation, RU - Residency Unlimited, and the School of Visual Art, all in New York. She has shown her work in many solo and group exhibitions, such as the Bakersfield Museum of Art, CA; Katonah Museum of Art, NY; Tall Wall Space, University of La Verne, CA; Kwan Fong Art Gallery, California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA; Soho House, West Hollywood, CA; The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel Aviv, Israel; and the Chandler Center for the Arts, AZ.





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