

Paolo Porelli

Paolo Porelli (b. 1966) is an artist based in Rome, Italy, and a co-founder of CRETA Rome, an international centre for ceramics and fine arts. He graduated in painting from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma and later began an extended period of experimentation with ceramics, identifying the anthropomorphic figure as his primary expressive form.

Clay remains his principal medium, though he frequently incorporates ready-mades and casts of found objects into his sculptures. His figures range from life-size to small scale and appear either as individual works or in installations. In recent projects, Porelli has used 3D imaging and 3D printing to develop prototypes for series of figures, which are then individualised through additions, subtractions, and alterations.

His work often addresses contemporary social tensions, combining surreal elements, found materials, and references to archaic symbolism.

Porelli's sculptures have been shown in nearly 20 solo exhibitions and over 90 group exhibitions, including international biennials across the United States, Europe, and Asia. He has participated in residencies at institutions including The Bray, The Clay Studio of Philadelphia, the European Ceramic Work Centre, and Jingdezhen International Studio.

Porelli is currently preparing museum solo exhibitions in the United States, Germany, and Italy for 2026–27. In 2027, his itinerant solo exhibition *Figure Out: Catastrophe or Regeneration* will be presented at the Fuller Craft Museum for six months. He was elected a member of the International Academy of Ceramics in 2021.

Visit **Paolo Porelli's** website and Instagram page.

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Divinities & Idols, 2018, slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze, in-glaze luster, luster, decals, 25cm H max



Green R(evolution), 2023-2024



3D Green Iconology, 2023, glazed stoneware, 56.5cm H max. Exhibited at the 63rd Faenza Prize, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy.

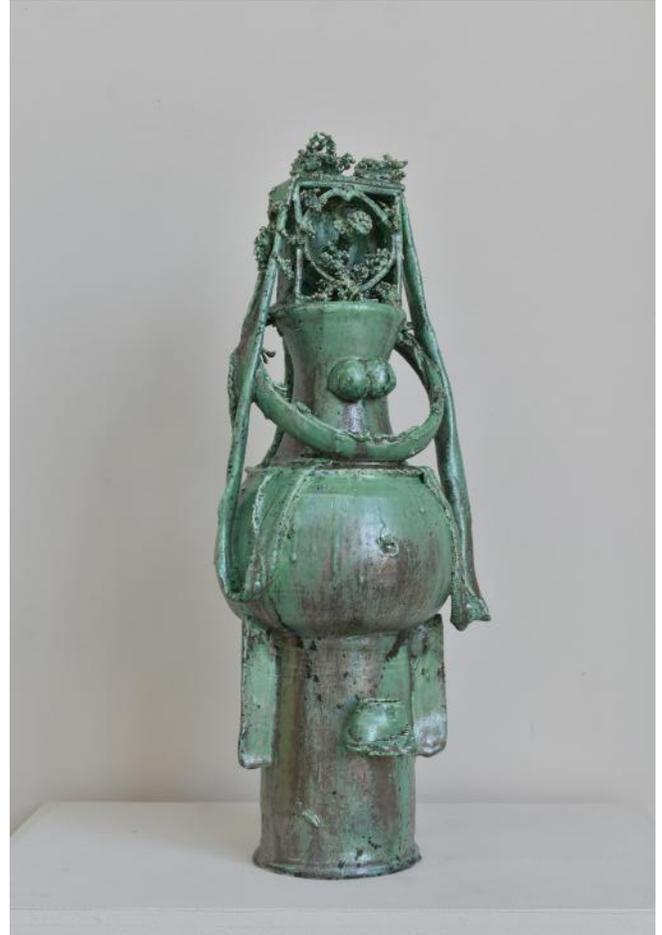


Sacred Wood, 2024. Slipped, glazed terracotta. 91cm H max. Exhibited at *Alive and Unfolding*, curated by Vasi Hirido, Ceramic Art Andenne, Le Delta, Namur, Belgium



Green Regeneration, 2023. glazed stoneware. 68cm H max. Exhibited at the 2025 NCECA Annual, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City, Utah, US





My most recent sculptures seek a symbiosis between man and nature, becoming a fusion of vegetal and anthropomorphic memories in an ever-unpredictable and undefined interplay of figuration and abstraction. The works belong to the new creative season still in full development in defence and support of nature, as emphasised by the use of the colour green, an incontrovertible reference to the natural environment. Green, with all its shades, is the colour I am using to cloth this new generation with a chromatic tone that immediately refers to the plant world and the chlorophyll that creates the vital miracle of oxygen. The diversity of techniques that normally characterises my work becomes a reflected metaphor for the natural model of biodiversity.

In the installation 3D Green Iconology, the sculptures are “combines” of a repertoire of various forms, printed in clay and combined to personify botanic creatures, manipulating classical sculptures, that projected into another dimension, biological and organic, become estranging figurative inventions. The 3D printer is not used to reproduce stereotypical copies of a model but creatively, indulging the imperfections created during the printing process to give rise to unexpected aesthetic inventions used in the composition. The sculpture is also enriched with real, natural elements from the plains of Montana in evocation of the ecosystem in which they grew. The three sculptures are covered with a green lithium, copper, and rutile glaze that creates a variegated and richly evocative naturalistic surface. Both this installation and the next were created while I was visiting artist at The Archie Bray Foundation's Voulkos studio in 2023.

Green Regeneration is a group of eight atavistic deities of the ancestral spirit of nature that promote an ecological rebirth in response to the environmental crisis that is the principal emergency on which everything else depends. For the production of these stoneware figures, a wide range of techniques from the most traditional, modelling solid, coil and slab, hand-building, wheel, to 3-D printing in clay are used, with the addition of organic materials dipped in slip. The installation is unified by the green glaze, a pop symbol of the Green movement.

Sacred Wood is a spontaneous generation of anthropomorphic images condensed into a vegetal repertoire, giving rise to a symbiotic hybrid figure, both abstract and figurative, which serves as a model for a new approach between man and nature. The title “Sacred Wood” refers to enclosed, uncontaminated places dedicated to the veneration of the sacred, a concept that is now absent in the abuse of power by contemporary man. The terracotta sculptures, modelled in my studio in Rome, are glazed with fusible transparent glazes tinted with copper.

Classic white, 2021-2024



Panthéon Blanc, 2021, porcelain, 52cm H max. Exhibited at the 3rd Blanc de Chine International Ceramic Art Award, 2022-23, Hangzhou, China



Metamorphoses of Minerva, 2024, porcelain, 73.5cm H max



Sibyls, 2022, slipped, glazed terracotta, 187cm H max



Metamorphoses of Minerva #3, 2024, *porcelain*, 64,5 x 25,5 x 15cm



Metamorphoses of Minerva #4, 2024, *porcelain*, 69,5 x 20,5 x 18cm



Metamorphoses of Minerva #5, 2024, *porcelain*, 65 x 19 x 17,5cm



Metamorphoses of Minerva #8, 2024, *porcelain*, 73,5 x 21,5 x 18cm



In addition to creating works that actively advocate in favour of nature, I devote myself to parallel installations focusing on important concepts of reality. This series is distinguished by the use of white, which is an indisputable reference to the classic, an ever-present memory of the archetype of sculpture.

In the case of The Metamorphoses of Minerva, I focus on the duality of human behaviour that inhabits the human soul in a complementary fashion. Rationality represents objective and functional knowledge, while madness arises from the visionary and surreal unconscious. The porcelain sculptures, created during the 2024 International Ceramics Symposium: "FIGURES" in Kecskemét, Hungary, are conceived in two autonomous and independent parts. The lower part of each figure is cast from a mould based on a 3-D printed scan of a classical figure of Minerva. The upper part of the sculptures, on the other hand, is an example of the unpredictable creation that arises from an improvised technique adapted to the needs of the moment, using an alternation of coiling, hand-building, wheel-thrown, press-moulding techniques plus the addition of slipped organic elements.

The installation Sibyls evokes the five sibyls depicted in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Sibyls are mysterious figures with prophetic qualities, intermediaries between the divine spirit and humankind. Thus, beyond the literary reference, the Sibyl is a symbol of hope for humankind to be clairvoyant. In the Sibyls, I analyse the concept of prediction in relation to contemporary man's inability to foresee the effects of consumerism on nature. With this installation, I also experimented with projecting videos taken from nature onto the white surfaces, creating an interplay between the static nature of the sculpture and the dynamism of the video.

Panthéon Blanc reflects an openness to the influences of the history of art of all times and places, passing through the votive sculptures and figurines of the Western and Eastern traditions. The installation is a review of figures of diverse morphologies and styles almost as if identifying a globalisation of the deities parallel to the temporal phenomenon of globalisation that invests our society. The sculptures are composed of porcelains from many countries to become a metaphor of biological and cultural contaminations, the maximum expression of our times. This plurality is also expressed in the use for the first time of many ceramic techniques contemporaneously to define the diverse natures of the figures of the Panthéon Blanc.

Divinities and Idols, 2018



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze*. 19 x 8,5 x 5,5cm



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze*. 19 x 8 x 6cm.



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze*. 17 x 6,5 x 7cm.



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta, in-glaze luster*. 20 x 7 x 8cm.



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze*. 15,5 x 5 x 4cm



Divinities & Idols, 2018, *slipped, glazed terracotta*. 19 x 7,5 x 8cm.



Divinities & Idols, 2018, slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze, 17 x 6,5 x 7cm



Divinities & Idols, 2018, slipped, glazed terracotta, overglaze, 16,5 x 6 x 5,5cm

Divinities & Idols is composed of a prolific group of complementary figures that chaotically fill the void between the two opposed poles of existence, a fluctuating series of divinities or idols, depending on whether they conduct us towards or away from ourselves. From another point of view, they are a grand exercise in metamorphoses, transience and relativity of the creative process. A constant of the variations that propel the sculptures towards a continuous regeneration in an attempt to establish the stroboscopic range of human essence. It is like participating in an ancient "Commedia dell'arte" in which the mask that reflects the true semblance of which we are made.

Works produced exclusively with slip-cast plaster moulds from historic figurines that play with multiples as a pretext to realize a transformation and arrive at a "sculptural object" that is both individual and autonomous but where one continues to sense the matrix of the standard-issue mould not made by the artist. Starting from a pre-existent impersonal statuette provoked in me a desire to contaminate the subject, through the concept of creative material, trespassing in historical and interior space concentrates in temporary images to then disintegrate anew in pure material. A ready-made image, an idea of the figure that can serve to give birth to a new genesis that was the point of departure of this project.