

GUILD GALLERY

LUDMILLA BALKIS: STASIS

June 9 – July 15, 2023

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 8, 6-8pm



Ludmilla Balkis, *STASIS*, Guild Gallery, 2023.

Guild Gallery is pleased to present the first solo U.S. exhibition of Ludmilla Balkis, a French artist known for her work in ceramics. Trained as a fashion designer, Balkis was an integral part of Céline’s creative team under Phoebe Philo, where she worked alongside Philo in London for many years before turning to ceramics. The development of her ceramic practice coincided with a move to the French Basque Country, where she sought out a more direct connection to the surrounding landscape.

Rooted in her relationship to nature, Balkis’ vessels present an evolving dialogue between organic elements and clay. With this exhibition, Balkis seeks to capture stasis—a state of static balance in movement—in her sculptures. Combining Japanese firing techniques with her command of clothing design, Balkis has defined her own language in ceramics. Opening on June 9, *STASIS* will spotlight more than 20 of Balkis’ new ceramics, revealing the artist’s unequivocal devotion to sensuality in minimalism and her constant pursuit of equilibrium, which transcends her artworks. In conjunction with her exhibition at Guild Gallery, Balkis’ work will be featured in “A Summer Arrangement: Object & Thing at Long House” in East Hampton from May 27 – September 3, 2023.

Balkis approaches ceramics much like she would a piece of fabric. She begins each piece by handbuilding around the emptiness, creating a dialogue with the clay that seeks to fill the void. It is from this exchange and tension that her minimal forms begin to take shape, manifesting into delicate sculptures and vessels that are in static

balance and movement much like her natural surroundings—the ancient Pyrenees mountains sculpted by the steadfast hand of time, the trees with their fluid forms, shaped by wind, rain, and light—each forms of perpetual movement. Working with a range of naturally colored clay, Balkis prefers to leave it in its raw, untouched state.

To further engage in a dialogue with the soil that surrounds her, Balkis uses geological materials that she forages on her daily walks, augmenting the surfaces of her clay pieces with tree ash, stones, sticks, and minerals. As a final step, Balkis often fires her ceramics in a wood kiln, which exposes each piece to flames, smoke, glowing coal and ash, producing a range of natural finishes. An essential part of Balkis' practice is her trust in nature's process and the act of letting go of the physical piece once a work is fired. As she states: "It keeps you humble that the material is not yours anymore, it's nature's work." The works presented in this exhibition reflect the landscape of Balkis' subconscious mind and the existential minimalism of nature.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ludmilla Balkis (b. 1981 Domont, France) is a ceramicist who has exhibited her work in galleries across Europe, including Paris, Biarritz, and Berlin. Balkis' work was also featured in a group show in the Oiasso Museoa, an archeological museum in Irun, Spain. Balkis studied fashion and art history in Paris where she discovered her desire to redefine the relationship with the body in society. Before turning to ceramics, Balkis was a fashion designer for many years and worked at Céline in London with Phoebe Philo.

Continuing her search for a profound connection to the fundamentals, Balkis was drawn to the more grounded reality of ceramics, and she began learning with Freya Bramble Carter in 2014 in London. Initially, she drew inspiration from pioneering ceramicists such as Lucy Rie, Hans Copper and Jennifer Lee's distinctive approaches. Returning to France in 2017, she was introduced to the Japanese approach to clay. Today, Balkis is based in the Basque Country—a place of raw, natural splendor. More than ever, soil and a contact with the earth and nature are at the heart of Balkis' endeavor, and her voluntary search for imperfection and unequivocal devotion to minimalism remain central to her practice.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Guild Gallery, founded by Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch, and designed by Roman and Williams, is a natural extension of Roman and Williams Guild. The gallery celebrates the millennia-long legacy of the decorative arts through exhibitions of contemporary masters of their respective media. With a focus on natural material such

as clay, wood, and stone, Guild Gallery celebrates artists and valuing utility in exquisite craftsmanship and form. Guild Gallery provides a platform to expertly showcase ideas and artists, creating a new dialogue between ancient and modern, fine art and design.

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