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DESIGN

The artist's illuminated world

Jenny Basso Pietrobon's lamps and light objects are forms that tell an intimate story – about the past, roots and community.

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Piotr Łucyan



The second life of an apartment in a 1960s block.

AD Poland Editorial Office

Beginning

Born in Toronto, Jenna Basso Pietrobon was raised in a Roman Catholic family of Italian descent, and her work is rooted in her personal history. Her grandparents emigrated from Europe to Canada in the 1950s. Her grandfather manufactured ceramic lamp bases, and her grandmother, a trained fashion designer, created lampshade patterns. As a young girl, Jenna spent weekends at the factory or visited after school, observing the craftsmen shaping, painting, and crafting ceramics. Growing up, she also danced as an amateur and put on performances with her siblings at her father's lighting factory. After earning her bachelor's degree in Ontario in 2008, she moved to New York City, where she worked as an architect and lighting designer, which taught her how to combine function and form. This was a precursor to creating her own light objects—lamps and sculptures in one.



Photo: press materials.



Photo: press materials.



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Meetings and places

The artist was influenced by her move to Paris, where she met Scarlett Rouge, the daughter of Michèle Lamy, Rick Owens' partner. The radical spirit of this controversial designer's world became close to her heart. Reminiscences of these fascinations can be found in the Merz series—these sculptural lamps combine names and influences that helped her liberate herself from a long-held sense of freedom: Rick's "monsters," the sculptures of Italian sculptor Marisa Merz, and Merzbau—a three-dimensional collage, a spatial assemblage of paper and various found objects by German artist Kurt Schwitters.

A pivotal moment came with her return to the land of her ancestors—Italy. Jenna began her work in the small town of Nove di Bassano, Italy, once a thriving center of ceramics production, now a major center. It was here that the "Break the Mold" project was born. By creating sculptural lamps composed of discarded plaster molds, Basso Pietrobon redefines the meaning of continuing tradition and bringing it into the present.

elements," the artist explains. "They are one-of-a-kind works, constructed from multiple plaster molds—objects that carry decades of history, skills, and memories." The molds themselves were discovered by Jenna in the basement of her cousin's ceramics factory—they date back to the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, a period when Nove supplied the world with ceramics. Now, in a region where global outsourcing has destroyed local production, they are relics of a once-thriving industry. For Basso Pietrobon, these forms have become both material and metaphor: vessels of lost potential, waiting for rebirth. Jenna's works are captivating and intriguing.



Photo: Giulio Favotto.



Photo: Giulio Favotto.



Photo: Giulia Favetta



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