



For five decades, until his death in 2021, Luis Bermudez masterfully produced ceramics and sculptural installations that reference Mesoamerican aesthetics and worldviews, inviting reflection on ancient cultures, contemporary discourse, and the human experience across space and time. Bermudez experimented with ceramic techniques throughout his career, producing hundreds of objects through his innovative use of castable refractory—a nonplastic, heat-resistant ceramic material—and dynamic mold-making methods. The breadth and density of his oeuvre demonstrate his lifelong commitment to the medium, and his work across several overlapping series allowed him to explore his ideas over sustained periods of time.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Bermudez frequently visited family in rural Mexico, where exposure to Mesoamerican pyramids and other sacred sites inspired lifelong thinking about ritual, ceremony, and philosophical concerns. He expressed these ideas in his Sacred Structures (2000–2007) and Sacred Places (2005–14) series, in which manipulated sake-bottle forms serve as metaphors for the human body. Their placement within architectural and natural environments considers humanity's relationship with life, society, and the natural world. In *El Cenote, C-2* (2005) and *El Cenote, C-4* (2006), the positioning of a figure above a circular hole representing a natural water deposit comments on personal sacrifice, while in the subseries *El Caracol* (2000–2006), vessels are placed inside textured and brightly colored dome structures

*Conflicted Offering*, 2004. Ceramic. 5 1/2 × 11 × 11 in. (14 × 27.9 × 27.9 cm)

that represent ancient observatories, introspective sites for studying the cosmos. In *Offerings* (2004–5), Bermudez juxtaposed his signature earthen and metallic-glazed serpents with unglazed porcelain bowls to produce visually contrasting works that speak directly to ritual practice, the empty bowls awaiting the possibility of a contribution to something beyond ourselves.

In Bermudez's installation *Myth, Place & Identity* (2010), thirty colorful sculptures are assembled in a grid-like pattern across a single wall. Serpent heads, including four with the artist's screaming face emerging from each snake's mouth, are presented alongside architectural details from Mesoamerican pyramids and numerous geological abstractions inspired by lightning, mountains, rivers, and snakes. These ceramics are emblematic of Bermudez's inventive use of color and form, imprinted with autobiographical and culturally specific references while gesturing toward universal interpretations. Restaged for *Made in L.A. 2023*, the installation coalesces the materials, techniques, and themes embedded in Bermudez's practice, serving as a memorial for a visionary artist gone too soon.

Bermudez was also a dedicated college art professor who taught across the greater Los Angeles area from 1980 until 2021. Though the artist is no longer physically with us, his legacy and presence endure in his artworks and through the generations of Los Angeles artists with whom he shared his knowledge and skills.

—Joseph Daniel Valencia



*El Caracol, C-4*, 2003. Castable refractory, earthenware with glazes. 16 × 13 × 10 1/2 in. (40.6 × 33 × 26.7 cm)



*La Cabeza (Alter Ego III)*, component of *Myth, Place & Identity*, 2010. Castable refractory with artificial salt glaze. 8 × 7 × 8 1/2 in. (20.3 × 17.8 × 21.6 cm)



*El Cenote, C-4*, 2006. Castable refractory, porcelain with glazes. 12 1/2 × 25 × 18 in. (31.8 × 63.5 × 45.7 cm)