

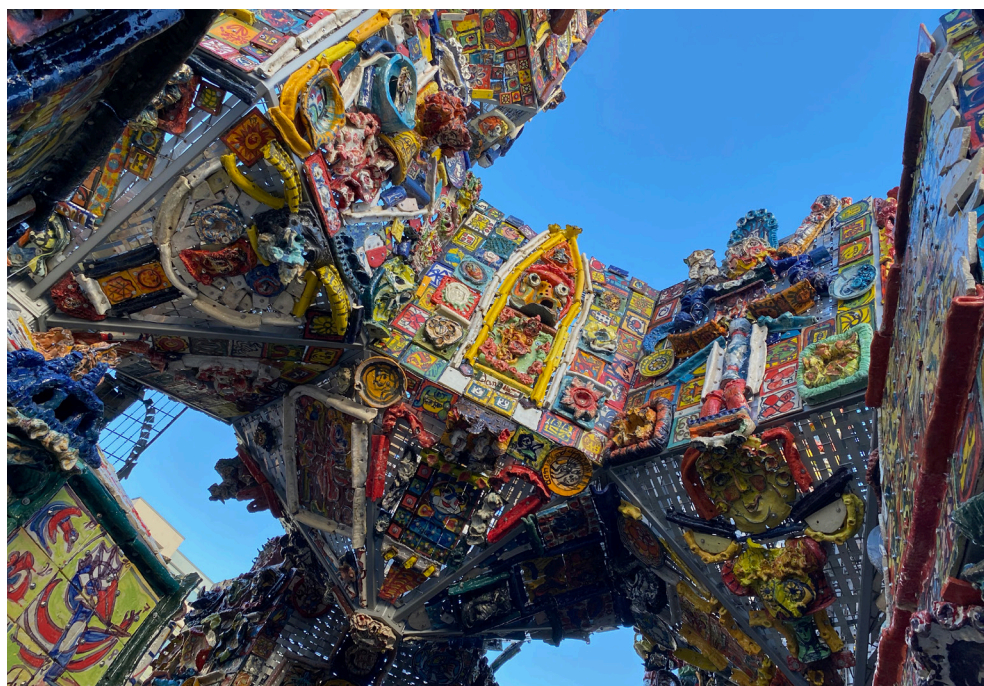
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Danielle Jacqui, "Le Colossal d'Art Brut ORGANuGAMME II," a site-specific, mixed-media sculptural work featuring a cladding of ceramic-relief tiles, which opened at La Ferme des Tilleuls, an art center in Renens, Switzerland, on November 5, 2022. All photos for brutjournal by Edward M. Gómez

DANIELLE JACQUI: IN SWITZERLAND, AN ART BRUT CREATOR'S GRAND, NEW MONUMENT

NOW ALMOST 90 YEARS YOUNG, THE ARTIST HAS REALIZED HER MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT EVER

by Edward M. Gómez

RENENS, SWITZERLAND— Recently, on the bright, crisp, late-autumn afternoon of November 5, 2022, a monumental expression of the sense of pure joy an artist derives from the process of creating was officially unveiled and inaugurated at La Ferme des Tilleuls, a small art center housed in a former railway-depot building in this small town located immediately to the west of Lausanne.

The tall, multicolored, ceramic-covered structure, "Le Colossal d'Art Brut ORGANuGAMME II," is the brainchild of the French artist Danielle Jacqui, which she had been developing and elaborating since 2006.

Like Lausanne, an elegant city built on hills and surrounded by a region of vineyards, Renens overlooks Lac Léman, with stunning views of the water and the majestic, snow-

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Above: Detail of Danielle Jacqui's "Le Colossal d'Art Brut ORGANuGAMME II," now on permanent display at La Ferme des Tilleuls, in Renens, Switzerland, on November 5, 2022.

Below: The artist on November 5, 2022, on the occasion of the unveiling of her new, monumental work of art.



topped Alps in the near distance that are more powerful than any big-budget fantasy movie's computer-generated special effects.

Renens is an industrial suburb of its larger neighbor. La Ferme des Tilleuls' property lies close to a small train station and the Swiss national railway tracks along which local and high-speed regional lines pass on their way west, to Genève, and east to Lausanne and other destinations.

The art center, which opened to the public in 2017, has become an important cultural hub for the town and another jewel in a crown of distinctive cultural institutions that are to be found in the broader, French-speaking "Suisse Romande" region of southwestern Switzerland. Among many others, they include the Collection de l'Art Brut, the renowned museum specializing in the work of visionary, autodidact art-makers, and Photo Elysée, one of Europe's most important photography museums, both of which are located in Lausanne; and, to the east, the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (known as "MEG").

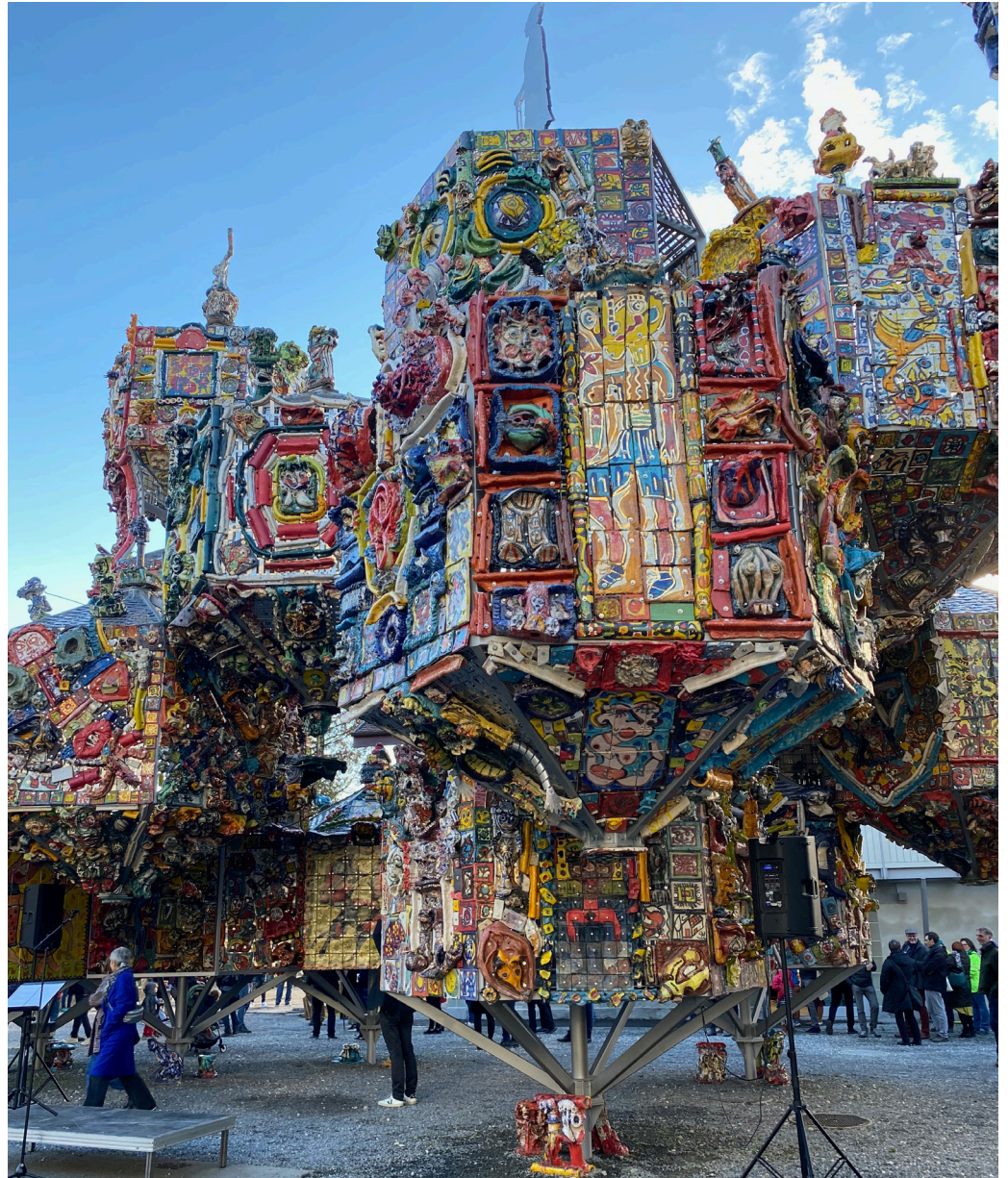
As La Ferme des Tilleuls' own promotional material points out, the art center's mission is to bring together artistic and scientific points of view regarding the complex world in which we live with a special focus on the artistic productions of creative types who find themselves living and pursuing their activities on the margins of mainstream society. Since it opened its doors a few years ago, it has presented numerous exhibitions of work by self-taught and trained contemporary artists that blur genre boundaries or that explore the use of certain materials, formats, and art-making techniques in novel ways.

In its main building, in addition to exhibition spaces; a multi-purpose room that can be used for film screenings, concerts, and special events; a books-and-gifts shop; and a café-restaurant, La Ferme des Tilleuls' facilities include a separate annex housing workshop spaces and lodgings for visiting artists. It is in an open space in a corner of the art center's property, tucked between the main building and the annex, that Danielle Jacqui's "ORGANuGAMME II" has been permanently installed.

As Jacqui, who was born in the Mediterranean coastal city of Nice in 1934, has sometimes recalled, as a young girl, after her parents separated, she felt marginalized and different; she found solace in books and, decades later, after she had married, started her own family, and divorced, she found satisfaction in art. By the 1970s, as the operator of her own flea-market stand, Jacqui began displaying some of the paintings she had produced herself, without any formal training in art-making.

In time, as she continued presenting her artworks publicly, they caught the attention of in-the-know figures in the world of outsider art, including the Lausanne-based

Another view of Danielle Jacqui's "Le Colossal d'Art Brut ORGANuGAMME II" on the grounds of La Ferme des Tilleuls, an art center located near the train station in Renens, Switzerland.



photographer Mario del Curto, whose emblematic images of some of the best-known, now-legendary *art brut* and outsider art creators from around the world have been published many times in magazines, newspapers, and books.

Today, del Curto serves on the advisory council of the Collection de l'Art Brut; over the years, he has played a leading role in the development of La Ferme des Tilleuls and, in particular, of Jacqui's ambitious "ORGANuGAMME II" project. (I remember when, a few years ago, in 2019, before the start of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, I met del Curto at the art center's café, and he drew a very preliminary sketch on a paper napkin of the support structure that was being proposed for Jacqui's monumental sculpture.)

Jacqui's mixed-media creations, such as the façade of her house in Roquevaire, a town in southern France to the northeast of Marseille, have routinely featured colorful ceramic elements. (She calls that art-decorated structure "The House of She Who Paints.") Over many years, she famously — and controversially, too, since her efforts did not always go down well with her neighbors — covered the entire front of that residence with multicolored paintings and three-dimensional ceramic elements, some of which suffered from exposure to the weather.

As Jacqui became established as an artist, she traveled to the United States for an artist's residency and showed her work at various venues in Europe. An inveterate writer, she has longed kept a detailed personal journal documenting her artistic activities and her thoughts about life, society, and the creative process. Just a few months ago, on the occasion of the inauguration of "ORGANuGAMME II," the artist also presented her big new book, *Le roman de celle qui peint* (*The Novel of She Who Paints*), which had just been issued by the Paris-based publisher Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc.

The book is a collection of Jacqui's diaristic writings and travelogues, touching upon her evolution as an artist (including her discovery of assorted materials and techniques), the challenges she faced as a single mother and the survival strategies she developed, and the ever-expanding network of friends, collaborators, and supporters who entered her life as her art became more widely known.

In one passage, the artist writes, "[E]ach experience leads to where one must go, and I believe that nothing is fortuitous."

Jacqui's "ORGANuGAMME II" has its roots in ideas and techniques she developed during her period as an artist in residence in a program based in Aubagne, a town to the east of Marseille, in 2006. At that time, she tapped into the local Provence region's ceramic-making traditions and felt buoyed by the spirit of the genre known in French as "*art singulier*," which refers broadly to art forms created by both self-taught and schooled artists that are hard to classify according to familiar category labels. (The French word "*singulier*" means "singular" or "unique.")

Ambitiously, Jacqui proposed covering the façade of Aubagne's main train station with a big mural made up of her colorful, sculptural ceramic tiles and reliefs. The project was approved by the town's governing council.

Then, for eight years, Jacqui worked on the large-scale artwork, producing enough ceramic units to cover some 500 square meters (roughly 5382 square feet) of wall-surface area. In 2014, however, a change of leadership in Aubagne's municipal government led to the termination of its support for the artist's project. Ultimately, La Ferme des Tilleuls and the city government of Renens stepped in, rescued the project, and transported the many thousands of variably sized ceramic pieces Jacqui had produced to the Swiss art center's site. There they sat in storage for a long time.

Meanwhile, starting in 2015, Jacqui began working on site at the art center with the architect Jean-Gilles Décosterd. Their challenge: to figure out what kind of structure could serve as a support surface for the artist's multi-piece ceramic confection, which originally had been intended to cover



Danielle Jacqui's three-dimensional, ceramic-relief elements are mounted on metal frames that form part of the support structure of "Le Colossal d'Art Brut ORGANuGAMME II."



*The artist Danielle Jacqui's new book, *Le roman de celle qui peint* (The Novel of She Who Paints), has been issued by the Paris-based publisher Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc.*

the front of a train station. Eventually they came up with a plan to construct a group of multi-sided, metal modules resembling old-fashioned spinning tops onto whose external walls Jacqui's vibrantly colored ceramic elements would be attached.

The La Ferme des Tilleuls sought funding for what would become Jacqui's site-specific "ORGANuGAMME II," and from 2020 through 2022, even as the pandemic dragged on, the artist collaborated with a technical team to erect the large-scale sculptural work.

The finished project boasts some staggering statistics: it consists of 36 tons of one-of-kind ceramic-sculpture pieces (about 4000 in all) and 26 metal modules placed on stands, elevated above the ground, with some stacked up to form towers. They're accessible by staircases and can be entered, serving as lookout towers offering views of the area surrounding the art center. The grand artwork's overall budget totaled approximately 2.4 million Swiss francs (roughly \$2.6 million).

On the day of the project's official unveiling last November, Jacqui circulated among swarms of visitors, and such speakers as Michel Thévoz, the well-known Swiss art historian and exhibition curator who years ago served as the Collection de l'Art Brut's founding director, and del Curto praised the French artist's monumental creation for what they described as its radical, audacious, democratic spirit.

Children squealed with glee as they climbed the stairs up to its towers, while other visitors examined its rollicking forms, and just about everyone tried to make sense of its cacophony of glowing colors and richly textured surfaces.

At one point during the afternoon, I spotted Jacqui sitting down, taking a break, and holding court as she greeted her admirers and signed copies of her new book. It was clear that the artist was savoring this moment, when the dream of realizing her monumental project had come true. (Outside on one of the "ORGANuGAMME II" modules, the name "Aubagne" appears, a reminder of the big art project's origins.)

As I watched the artist interact with visitors to La Ferme des Tilleuls, I thought of a passage in *Le roman de celle qui peint* in which Jacqui summarizes a conversation she once had with a female friend many years ago. At that time, the artist was surprised to learn from her associate that she really did not like Jacqui's art. The artist writes, "[S]he found that the façade [of my house in Roquevaire] was horrible and that it was destroying the landscape of Provence. I told her that the house [had been published] in many books and that it had been internationally recognized, and that tourists from around the world stopped by to take photos. She replied that she couldn't help it if those people had bad taste."

Such comments have never slowed Danielle Jacqui down. In her big new book, she also observes, "I assert that my path is always *singulier*."

