



MUSÉE BARBIER-MUELLER  
GENÈVE

## GROUND FLOOR

### THE BRICK

#### A rather unusual morpheme

I might as well admit it straightaway, my connection with bricks was not the result of a career choice, but clearly originated in Rwanda where, from 1984 to 1986, I had the opportunity to lead a ceramics project on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. At the time, I experienced a real visual shock faced with the activities of brick makers in some of that country's swamplands.

Their work, theatrically unifying time and place, demonstrated every production stage, from extracting the clay to shaping, from drying in situ on the ground and then in well-ventilated rows to the "stack" kilns, and from assembly and firing right through to selling! This unity of action revealed, to the young ceramist that I was then, a scale hitherto unknown to me: the ceramic landscape. The notion of the hand's or even the body's dimensions as the gauge for the ceramist's imagination and actions, was here turned completely upside down.

I don't know what deep or unconscious ties bind me to this morpheme – brick or tile – making it one of the fundamental vectors of my work in clay. But I don't think it's a purely utilitarian connection. Thanks to the brick, which, from its underground origins, paradoxically conquers the world by its simplicity and modesty, I've found the means to explore my own. The almost insignificant brick is the conveyor of our dreams, from the mildest to the craziest.

*Jacques Kaufmann*