# CERAMIC DESIGN WORKSHOP: A CREATIVE EXPERIENCE THROUGH TERRITORIAL JEWELRY WITH THE FLOR DO BARRO GROUP, ALTO DO MOURA, CARUARU —PERNAMBUCO/BRAZIL

WORKSHOP DE DESIGN CERÂMICO: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA CRIATIVA ATRAVÉS DE JOIAS DE TERRITÓRIO COM O GRUPO FLOR DO BARRO, ALTO DO MOURA - PERNAMBUCO

TALLER DE DISEÑO CERÁMICO: UNA EXPERIENCIA CREATIVA A TRAVÉS DE LA JOYERÍA TERRITORIAL CON EL GRUPO FLOR DO CLAY, ALTO DO MOURA - PERNAMBUCO

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# **ABSTRACT**

This article presents the results of the Ceramic Design workshop around the theme of territorial jewelry to promote creativity and strengthen the feeling of belonging to a collective of women from the Flor do Barro group in Alto do Moura, a suburb of the city of Caruaru, in the state of Pernambuco-Brazil. The main objective of the workshop was to challenge them to explore other possibilities of forms with clay during the execution of the academic extension project "Clay Flowers: mapping and ideation of the craft production chain". The workshop was planned and carried out through workshops based on design tools to stimulate the creative and productive capacity of artisans. The processes of Ideation, Generation and Selection of alternatives; Planning, Execution and Detailing of ten products; Prototyping and Testing were used. Experimenting with the Flor do Barro group territory jewelry is a strategy for valuing ceramic knowledge, through design and its dialogic character for the group's sustainability.

# **KEYWORDS**

Ceramic Design; Territory Jewels; Craftsmanship.

# **RESUMO**

Este artigo apresenta os resultados do workshop de Design Cerâmico em torno do tema da joalheria territorial para promover a criatividade e fortalecer o sentimento de pertencimento a um coletivo de mulheres do grupo Flor do Barro em Alto do Moura, um subúrbio da cidade de Caruaru, no estado de Pernambuco-Brasil. O principal objetivo do workshop foi desafiá-las a explorar outras possibilidades de formas com argila durante a execução do projeto de extensão acadêmica "Flores de Barro: mapeamento e ideação da cadeia produtiva artesanal". O workshop foi planejado e realizado por meio de oficinas baseadas em ferramentas de design para estimular a capacidade criativa e produtiva das artesãs. Foram utilizados os processos de Ideação, Geração e Seleção de alternativas; Planejamento, Execução e Detalhamento de dez produtos; Prototipagem e Testes. Experimentar a joalheria territorial com o grupo

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Flor do Barro é uma estratégia de valorização do conhecimento cerâmico, através do design e seu caráter dialógico para a sustentabilidade do grupo.

# PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Design Cerâmico; Joias Territoriais; Artesanato.

# RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los resultados del taller de Diseño Cerámico en torno al tema de la joyería territorial para promover la creatividad y fortalecer el sentimiento de pertenencia a un colectivo de mujeres del grupo Flor do Barro en Alto do Moura, un suburbio de la ciudad de Caruaru, en el estado de Pernambuco-Brasil. El principal objetivo del taller fue desafiarlas a explorar otras posibilidades de formas con arcilla durante la ejecución del proyecto de extensión académica "Flores de Barro: mapeo e ideación de la cadena productiva artesanal". El taller fue planeado y realizado a través de talleres basados en herramientas de diseño para estimular la capacidad creativa y productiva de las artesanas. Se utilizaron los procesos de Ideación, Generación y Selección de alternativas; Planificación, Ejecución y Detallado de diez productos; Prototipado y Pruebas. Experimentar la joyería territorial con el grupo Flor do Barro es una estrategia de valorización del conocimiento cerámico, a través del diseño y su carácter dialógico para la sostenibilidad del grupo.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Diseño Cerámico; Joyas Territoriales; Artesanía.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Flor do Barro group, formed in 2014 by twenty women artisans, arose with the intention of greater recognition of local female crafts. The women who make up the group are, for the most part, daughters, sisters and granddaughters descended from the famous families of Mestre Vitalino and his disciples. The women who make up the group are, for the most part, daughters, sisters and granddaughters descended from the famous families of Mestre Vitalino and his disciples. The formation of the group began through the first meetings that took place in the home of one of the members. Since 2023, the group has had its headquarters at Casa da Mulher Artesã do Agreste, in Alto do Moura neighborhood in Caruaru-PE.

Alto do Moura is a neighborhood in the city of Caruaru, in Pernambuco - Brazil, located approximately 7 km from the city center. It houses one of the most important craft centers in the country, and gained national notoriety thanks to the projection of one of its most illustrious artists, Mestre Vitalino. Still alive, Vitalino Pereira dos Santos - Mestre Vitalino - had what the locals call disciples, artisans dedicated to the continuation of his art. Inspired by the works created by Mestre Vitalino, the themes reproduced by the artisans, who follow his tradition, are folkloric motifs and which portray the daily life of country people, such as: the bumba-meu-boi; the maracatu, the fife bands, the refugees from the drought, the cangaço and the cangaceiros (mainly the famous Lampião and Maria Bonita), the cowboy, the rodeo; the wedding; burial in rural areas, etc.

Since the first half of the 20th century, the production of artistic ceramics has become the largest source of income for families in the neighborhood. Currently, at ABMAM - Association of Clay Artisans and Residents of Alto do Moura, more than 700 artisans are registered. However, the representation of women artisans is still small in the community and local crafts no longer represent the tradition inherited by Mestre Vitalino. The majority of artisans also work producing utilitarian pieces, dolls, and surrealist works that follow Mestre Galdino's aesthetics. And to this day, handicrafts are sold in the artisans' own homes and studios, which provides the neighborhood with a tourist route.

In an attempt to bring design and local crafts closer together, in 2021, through immersion in the reality of the Flor do Barro group, the project was carried out: "Flores do Barro: mapping and ideation of the craft production chain". The project was registered as an Extensionist

Action for the Design Course at the Federal University of Pernambuco. The general aim of the project was to propose, through design and its dialogical character, strategies for valuing resources for the production and commercialization of handicrafts from the Flor do Barro group do Alto do Moura-Caruaru.

One of the results obtained from this project was the analysis of the Flor do Barro group Production Chain, which investigated the functioning of the artisanal environment, by tracking the techniques, routes and agents involved from obtaining the clay to the commercialization of the pieces. From the analyzes it was possible to notice that women artisans have a collective performance format and group speech, however, each of the participants produces, burns and finishes their pieces individually, in their homes or studios (SANTOS et al, 2023).

This result corroborates the doctoral studies carried out by Barbosa (2019), when she observes that the practice of artisanal activity in the Alto do Moura neighborhood occurs individually, despite family groups sharing creation and commercialization spaces. All artisans in the neighborhood follow the technique of manual plastic clay modeling and fire their ceramic pieces in low heat capacity kilns (< 800 oC) fueled by wood and finish the pieces with cold, polymer-based paint (SANTOS et al, 2022).

The artifact and the artisanal environment manifest a series of meanings, traditions and practices rooted in a place. Among the composition that surrounds this construction is design, which cannot be reduced to an industrialized global market. The core is much deeper, acting provides a more optimistic way of looking at the future, reframing human desires as opportunities.

Thus, inherent to the objective proposed in this article is the premise that using design tools it is possible to intervene in the process of valorization and visibility of Pernambuco's crafts, aiming at the sustainability of the sector. The artisans of the Flor do Barro group declared the need to take ownership of new collective production routines, exploring different techniques, tools and machinery not explored in the community. Therefore, a new thought is planned that modifies the process of ways of making, and that, at the same time, is aligned with the sustainable maintenance of its artisanal activity and that allows the permanence of the manual ceramic tradition.

Therefore, below is the result of the Ceramic Design Workshop with women artisans, which aimed to promote creativity and a feeling of collective belonging. The challenge was to make them give new meaning to their view of clay around a theme that had not yet been worked on by the community, Territorial Jewels.

The context of jewelry, by definition, is linked to the implicit value of the material, production and crafted with precious metals. The selection of less noble materials with low environmental impact has given rise to a new market parallel to that of traditional jewelry, artisanal jewelry, which is treated, from now on, as "territorial jewelry".

The term characterizes the artifact that carries traditional techniques, local raw materials, in addition to concepts and themes that portray different cultural aspects of the region. And, therefore, it brings together the preciousness of the jewelry and the territorial references of craftsmanship (GONÇALVES et al, 2023).

# 2. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The Ceramic Design Workshop is one of the strategic actions to bring design closer to crafts, and the result of the extension action to map the crafts production chain of the Flor do Barro group. The methodological foundation is in the productions of the UFPE Design Laboratory O Imaginário, which aims to meet demands linked to crafts and industry, integrating extension, teaching and research, within five axes: management, production, design, communication and market (ANDRADE; CAVALCANTI, 2020). The workshop arises from the desire of women artisans to test their skills with clay, through new production techniques and directs attention to the dichotomy between their individual work and collective thinking.

This paradox confronts the artisans' format of action and the common discourse interested in exploring new techniques and forms. The creation of a collection of territorial jewelry appears as a means proposed by the artisans themselves, which socially represents the desire to follow new paths coexisting with traditional local figurative art and the strengthening of the feminine positioning of Flor do Barro group. Therefore, the workshops were planned with the aim of giving new meaning to women's relationship with clay.

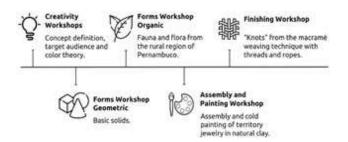
Reflection on this expansion of artisans' interests can be associated with Andrade's (2015, p. 80) approach to the local-global relationship. The author confronts the concept of development and culture based on the reality of handicraft producing communities. To this end, she quotes Aloísio Magalhães (1927-1982) and his phrase: "Homogeneity is untrue", indicating the idea

of globalization as a result of pluralism, respect for differences and the fight against cultural monopolies. As well as the strength that Aloísio attributed to those coming from popular knowledge, as "it is from them that the potential is gauged, the vocation is recognized and the more authentic values of a nationality are discovered" (Andrade, 2015, p. 81).

Recognizing and valuing the vocation of a people allows development work in a locality, that is, economic dynamism and improvement in the community's quality of life. This can occur by exploring social opportunities and, at the same time, conserving traditions and natural resources, as these are possibly the foundation for the vocation.

In this sense, it is pointed out that from the producers' point of view, the designer can systematize the production processes and identify the values of craftsmanship. This is a meeting of mutual and feedback interest.

In this article, design tools such as: ideation, generation and selection of alternatives, execution planning and collection detailing, prototyping and testing were detailed in a work plan that included creativity workshops, shape studies, assemblies, painting and finishes. Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Diagram of the workshop process. **Source:** Authors.

The workshops took place in an immersion with the artisans for three days, in November 2022, at the group's headquarters in Alto do Moura, in Caruaru. Aiming to expand the visual and symbolic repertoire of the artisans and collaborate in the creation of the collection concept and reflection of the target audience.

The study of colors aimed to present the colors and the principles that govern their relationships in a spatial structure (surface, depth, fusion and tension) and was inserted as creative programmatic content to explore the different possibilities of uses and harmonies. To this end, harmony schemes were studied based on the color circle and the cultural and contextual variations in the symbolic and emotional meanings of colors.

Still in the creativity workshops, chromatic hues and their qualities were explored based on lighting and color temperature. As for saturation, the purity and intensity of the hues were worked on. With different shades of gray and mixtures of primary and secondary colors, the artisans made saturation adjustments which created different visual effects and could be related to the clay applications and target audiences.

An analysis of similar items, with handcrafted ceramic jewelry from different countries, was presented as a teaching resource for geometric and organic shapes workshops, presenting the bases for formal principles (LUPTON and PHILLIPS, 2008). This tool sought to identify visual elements, concepts or design solutions similar to the theme being worked on. The organization of the products found allowed discussions about trends, inspirations, elements of nature, and technological solutions.

The aforementioned analysis includes thirteen different producers from the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa. It is available in its full version at the following data storage link: <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jyiXu3JClDdk-jkAnm\_UpY3JZxqi5oQS/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jyiXu3JClDdk-jkAnm\_UpY3JZxqi5oQS/view</a>.

Also summarized in figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Diversity of ceramic adornments around the world. **Source:** Authors.

The assembly, painting and finishing workshops were planned as a process of creative immersion.



Figure 3: Video lesson showing the application and creation of knots to close the pieces.

Source: Authors.

The macramé knotting technique was selected for the closures and finishes of thepieces. Video lessons were produced to instruct how to manufacture the parts, which are available on the online video sharing platform, YouTube, with free access through the links:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKMQS1myKCohttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-hJZozuQeo

# 3. RESULTS

On the first day of the Workshop, a dialogue took place between the artisans and the technical team of the extension project about how and for whom they could normally create their pieces. This conversation took place with the support of printed magazines to recognize the target audience of the jewelry they would like to create. This part was dedicated to the target audience identification exercise.

The first creativity workshop proposed was to prepare a moodboard or semantic panel, which is a visual tool whose purpose is to convey concepts and project proposals.

The perception of being able to create pieces, for a population different from those they usually live with in their own community, was understood as positive by all the women in the group. The technique of observation and cutting out magazines with images of people who might like the pieces they want to produce was used. An image panel was assembled by category: person, environment, customs, objects, etc. The artisans had to imagine a type of person or customer and define their name, profile, housing, clothing, habits, objects they like, etc.

After a discussion regarding the images they selected, a moment of collective collage on A3 paper was proposed. And after studying the target audience, an introductory conversation was held about the study of color, color circle, types of combinations, mixtures of hues and lighting variations. Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Content exhibition on target audience definition and color theory. **Source:** Authors.

The artisans initially tested the color assembly process by mixing hues. Next, they explored the lighting possibilities of their chromatic creations with gray levels. Several color palettes were generated, all with records of their compositions. Figure 5.



**Figure 5:** Integrated moodboard composition: target audience and color theory. **Source:** Authors.

The geometric shapes workshop proposed to expand the group's figurative repertoire, starting from basic shapes (triangles, circles, squares and rectangles), took place on the second day of the event. The artisans of the Flor do Barro group already have the ability to manually model free anthropomorphic figurative forms, and wanted to try new manufacturing techniques with clay, such as flat modeling.

The geometric shapes in the clay were made with the help of manual tools such as knives, box cutters and also objects available in their homes such as: PET bottle caps, cups, basins and others that enabled this configuration of basic shapes. Figure 6. It is known that the construction of artifacts based on materials available on site improves productivity, the generation of alternatives, learning and makes these workshops a more playful and practical moment.



**Figure 6:** Study of geometric shape in clay. **Source:** Authors.



Figure 7: Study of organic form with the theme of flora and fauna from the Agreste region of Pernambuco. Source: Authors.

Still on the second day, geometric studies were associated with the observation of the organic nature of the flora of the Agreste region where they live. The artisans were invited to look closely at the surroundings of Alto do Moura and understand which plant forms are characteristic of the region. Figure 7.

They selected several seeds, leaves and fruits that became formal references, stamps and other work tools. After this action, they returned to modeling in their usual organic areas, however, outside the universe of anthropomorphic forms. Several types of vegetation, native seeds and even their bodies (forearms) were used as tools to create subtle curves for the pieces. Figure 8.





**Figure 8:** Color study and application in shapes. **Source:** Authors.

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to assembling, painting and finishing the pieces. The production of both shape workshops was exposed to the large group and it was suggested that the pieces be composed individually. As a practical activity, the artisans were instructed to think and produce a prototype of the product that would be an object of interest to the customer, which

they had already defined in the previous workshop. They should justify the choice of the product and show why it would be of interest to that customer.

Each artisan needed to choose the elements to make up their jewelry and, with the support of a blank A4 sheet of paper, distribute them to make up a set consisting of a necklace, earrings or bracelet. The strategy of composing the pieces with both geometric and organic shapes was the biggest challenge for everyone. It was observed that each artisan has their own preferences in composing the sets, and this way of expanding the variables proposed in the studies of form occurred with great enthusiasm and the desire to recreate countless times.

An internal and collective curation, composed of all the artisans participating in the Workshop, was proposed to select the pieces that would make up the Group's Portfolio. Color study exercises were revived and the artisans were able to finish painting their pieces. Figure 9.



**Figure 9:** Color study and application in shapes. **Source:** Authors.

In the final stage, the macramé knotting workshop took place with the aim of presenting alternative fastening systems using natural material, threads and cords. Figure 10. Initially, a theoretical class was given on some knots with quick, practical and adjustable closure. Afterwards, an immersion was carried out to facilitate the artisan's skill and resourcefulness. This moment of recreating experiences related to macramé provided an understanding of uniting the production already carried out (beads and clay pendants) into a whole, with easy techniques that enabled understanding for a significant step by step. Having this teaching that covers new teaching methods regarding the finishing of the piece was essential to achieve a fit that enhances the value of the jewelry.

In this way, the constructive results in the pieces aimed to propose a format that mixed clay and threads, providing a compilation of craftsmanship from beginning to end. It was also observed that the artisans repeated the knot closing process several times, and with this rhythm

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of trying multiple times, they concluded a positive and satisfactory production.



Figure 10: Study of knots and shape composition Source: Authors.

Macramé is an ancient weaving technique that involves tying knots together, forming a whole. It is suitable and widely used for various compositions in crafts, mainly in bags, necklaces, bracelets, curtains, streamers, etc. The knots for bracelets and necklaces were presented on site and also made available on video for training, as mentioned in topic 2 - Methodological Procedures.

The territory jewelry prototypes were assembled individually with elements created collectively. The culminating moment of the Workshop was the photo session of the territory jewelry created and tested by the women of the Flor do Barro group. Figure 11.



Figure 11: Tests of the Flor do Barro territory jewels group. Source: Authors.

# 4. DISCUSSIONS

Overall, the participating artisans perceived the Ceramic Design Workshop as positive. During the evaluation of the work, some statements were collected, such as the group's leading artisan: "It's an extra level of creativity, because we spend our whole lives, 60 years, just working figuratively, right? It's very important, it's cool because it's another art."

One of the artisans declared:

"It's a great discovery, a wonderful learning experience. It's another thing to understand that today we are making jewelry, we are not making figurative art, but rather jewelry with the colors that we learned here, suitable precisely for Flor do Barro jewelry (...) It's thanks to getting out of the figurative, utilitarian routine, it's an additional creation, so this is challenging and very rewarding."

They also spoke about the importance for new generations who no longer show interest in traditional crafts: "(...) we can bring along little people who will come, so that tomorrow they can say, if they, with sixty-somethings, could create all this wonderful stuff, then we can too".

From a technical perspective of the process, the project limitation lies in the composition of the ceramic mass. The clay usually used in the production of ceramic pieces from Alto do Moura has low mechanical resistance and is not resistant to high firing temperatures, that is, with little refractory material in the composition. The surface treatment process with the application of ceramic enamel was not possible, so the Territory Jewels were only assembled with a cold paint finish, synthetic enamel.

Ceramic enamels are surface treatments based on natural glazes and oxides that improve the mechanical resistance of pieces and add color and value to the material. However, as it is a ceramic technology, it requires specific equipment, materials and procedures, such as high firing temperatures (>900°C).

The explanation above emphasizes that in a second workshop it is necessary to use refractory clay, plus inorganic material, capable of receiving medium temperature ceramic enamel (900 - 1100°C) and the use of furnaces with greater heat capacity for sintering the pieces, up to and the use of furnaces with greater heat capacity for sintering the pieces, up to 1300°C.

# 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the difficulties due to the pandemic situation during the period of carrying out the activities, this project had its relevance related to bringing design closer to craftsmanship through immersion in the reality of a ceramics group composed only of women. The general objective of the project was to propose, through design, resource valorization strategies for the production and commercialization of the Flor do Barro group in Alto do Moura, Caruaru.

Expanding target audiences is a possibility for the Flor do Barro group brand to be recognized. In addition to the objectives outlined in the extension actions, a reflection that accompanied the entire course of the project refers to the controversial reconciliation of design with crafts. In addition to the objectives outlined in the extension actions, a reflection that accompanied the entire course of the project refers to the controversial reconciliation of design with crafts. Although it already seems to be academically surpassed, it was clear that the Flor do Barro group does not understand it this way because during the debate the artisans demonstrated total interest in new ways of creating, which go beyond the tradition of figurative art from Alto do Moura.

In this regard, we conclude that design acts as a tool for strengthening artisan groups in Brazil, providing ways of more positive actions to consolidate women's collective thinking, reformulating collective desires as opportunities. Therefore, an artifact can be understood as a cultural product if it reveals its materiality, values, meanings and techniques, referring to the space and time in which it was produced.

Regarding the risk of intervening in artisanal work, Janete Costa (1932-2008) defends that: "this risk will always exist", considering that the artisan, like a large part of society, is also sensitive to changes. "It's up to us to ensure that they don't lose their cultural continuity, but I think we have to take that risk." To this end, the architect from Pernambuco assigns the designer the responsibility of deeply understanding "the spirit of tradition", with the aim, above all, of improving their income and living conditions. "It's interfering without hurting."

The creative experience with the group expanded the recognition of the territorial vocation and, with it, the opportunities for economic dynamism and improved quality of life for women in the community. The effectiveness of the "design and craftsmanship" relationship lies in conveying to the products the particular authenticity of the culture in which the producers are immersed. This concept, authenticity, refers to the unique way in which each artist or artisan sees the world around them and is able to represent it or express their feelings or emotions.

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JAS: curadoria de dados, validação.

MBSS: validação.

ACMAB: conceituação, aquisição de financiamento, investigação, administração de projetos, supervisão, validação, escrita - rascunho original.

GDGAS:conceituação, aquisição de financiamento, investigação, metodologia, administração de projetos, supervisão, validação, visualização, escrita - rascunho original, escrita - revisão e edição.

Conflict declaration: nothing has been declared.