

**Label excerpts regarding contemporary artists Cindy Sherman and Roberto Lugo from “The Luxury of Clay: Porcelain Past and Present” Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, 2022.**

**Note:** This exhibition was on view in the dacha with special displays in the mansion February 19–June 26, 2022.

[Photo on label]



*Portrait of Roberto Lugo on the reverse*  
Photograph by John Dean

**8. A Queen and I**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2018

Terra cotta, china paint, luster

*Loan from Jacqueline Tibbs Copeland and René Copeland*

The contemporary artist Roberto Lugo describes his teapots as symbols of “sitting down with topics that people will discuss.” He recontextualizes the ceramic vessel with images of figures not traditionally represented on such objects.

The teapot here is similar in shape and color to a nearby piece of Meissen glazed stoneware imitating lacquer. Lugo’s pot features a portrait of Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange (1784–1882), a Baltimore-based educator and founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious order of African American nuns in the Catholic Church. Lange’s selfless commitment to protecting and educating her community affords her the moniker “queen.” Lugo’s self-portrait appears opposite hers, on the reverse of the teapot.



**8. Madame de Pompadour (née Poisson) tureen and platter**

Cindy Sherman, designer (American, b. 1954)

Ancienne Manufacture Royale de Limoges (French, 1737–present)

Arte Magnus, retailer (New York) Limoges, 1990

Hard-paste porcelain with silkscreen transfer, platinum, enamel decoration

*Museum purchase, 2006 (26.283.1–3)*

In 1990 the New York firm Arte Magnus asked the contemporary artist Cindy Sherman to create limited edition porcelain tableware for manufacture by Limoges, in France. Sherman donned a wig, applied makeup, and wore prosthetic breasts to photograph herself as Madame de Pompadour, the legendary patron of the Sèvres porcelain factory. The manufactory applied Sherman’s image to an imitation eighteenth-century Sèvres-style soup tureen.

Little fish—a reference to Madame de Pompadour’s maiden name, Poisson—also decorate the surface of the vessel. The tureen and a platter, both in Sèvres’ eighteenth-century rose pink, informally known as rose Pompadour, cheekily reinterpret and mimic the original Sèvres design for the soup tureen, which is similar to the turquoise tureen nearby.

**Center:**

**THE LUXURY OF CLAY**

**PORCELAIN PAST AND PRESENT**

In conjunction with The Luxury of Clay: Porcelain Past and Present, the exhibition currently in the dacha, a selection of contemporary ceramics by the artists Chris Antemann, Roberto Lugo, and Eva Zeisel can be viewed interspersed among the objects from Hillwood’s permanent collection in five rooms on the first floor of the mansion. The installation is the fourth in a series of Hillwood collaborations with contemporary ceramicists, including Eva Zeisel (2005), Bouke de Vries (2019), and Vladimir Kanevsky (2021).

Left

*On chest of drawers at left*



**Obama and Me vase**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2020: special commission after an earlier model

Hard-paste porcelain, china paint, luster

*Loan from Walker Guffey*

A portrait of Barack Obama (b. 1961), the forty-fourth president of the United States and the first African American to hold that office, adorns one side of this vase, and a self-portrait of Roberto Lugo appears on the other side. The intertwined words and letters on the sides of the vase, including POTUS—the acronym for president of the United States—reference Lugo’s roots as a graffiti artist. This vase melds several cultural references—to Islamic pottery, Chinese blue and white porcelain, and classical European shapes—drawing the viewer’s attention to the vase’s surface, with its multicultural motifs and patterns introduced on a traditional form.

Photo on label:



Photo courtesy of the Wexler Gallery

*Portrait of Roberto Lugo on the reverse*

*On table in doorway*



**Questlove and Nina Simone vase**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2021

Glazed stoneware, enamel paint, luster

*Loan from Teddi Dolph*

Some of Roberto Lugo’s ceramic work directly references hip-hop culture through visual representations of artists, activists, and musicians. This vase depicts on one side a portrait of Ahmir Khalib Thompson (b. 1971), the American musician, songwriter, author, and film director known professionally as Questlove, and on the other side Eunice Kathleen Waymon (1933–2003), the American singer, songwriter, musician, and civil rights activist known professionally as Nina Simone. The portraits on the handles are of Questlove and the abolitionist and political activist Harriet Tubman (1822–1913). By juxtaposing images of notable people of color from the past and from today on the same vessel, Lugo creates new connections and relationships between them.

Photo on Label:



Photo courtesy of the Wexler Gallery

*Portrait of Nina Simone on the reverse*

Right

#### Image on Label



Photo courtesy of the Wexler Gallery

#### ROBERTO LUGO

Roberto Lugo (b. 1981) is a Philadelphia-based American artist, ceramicist, social activist, spoken word poet, and educator of Puerto Rican descent. Known for his porcelain sculptures, Lugo's work centers on illuminating porcelain's historically aristocratic surface with imagery commenting on inequality, poverty, and social and racial injustice.

Lugo draws on traditional European and Asian porcelain forms, such as urns and teapots, as well as classic decorative patterns and motifs and combines them with his own stylized content and imagery inspired by urban graffiti and hip-hop culture. In many cases, he features portraits of people from the Black and Latino communities—including civil rights leaders, hip-hop artists, writers, and other cultural figures along with himself and family members—whose faces, stories, and values have been historically inaccessible to and absent from such luxury items as fine porcelain. "I imagine how much the world could change for a child who walks through the doors of a museum and sees a portrait of someone who looks like them on a piece of pottery," Lugo has stated. "Representation is establishing what can be possible and demonstrating how beautiful diversity is."

Lugo's work has been featured in exhibitions at numerous institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art and can be found in the collections of many institutions, including the National Museum of African American History and Culture and now Hillwood. Among Lugo's numerous awards are a Pew Fellowship, the Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon Polsky Rome Prize, and a United States Artist Award. He is an assistant professor of ceramics at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University, Philadelphia.

*On chest of drawers at right*



#### **Vengo dal Ghetto: AOC vase**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2020

Glazed ceramic

Loan from the artist and the Wexler Gallery

Many of Roberto Lugo's works feature two portraits, but this vase has only one focal point: a bespectacled Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, nicknamed AOC, a Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New York and the youngest woman ever elected to Congress. Tigers, the Chinese zodiac sign symbolizing strength and courage, flank her face. Through the vase's Spanish title—*Vengo dal Ghetto: AOC* (I come from the ghetto: AOC)—Lugo establishes a connection between his Latin roots and those of Ocasio-Cortez.

Lugo refers to himself as a "ghetto potter," firmly rooting his work in the realities of his Philadelphia upbringing. In this sense, he acknowledges the inner city as the wellspring of his resourcefulness and creativity, and at the same time, references the part of his identity tied to an aristocratic art form traditionally unrelated to work expressive of an urban aesthetic.

**This label will be on view from March to June**

*On fourth shelf from the top*



### **Rosa Parks gun teapot**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2021

Glazed ceramic, luster, steel, epoxy, enamel paint

*Loan from the artist*

Photo on Label



Photo courtesy of the Wexler Gallery

*Portrait of John Lewis on the reverse*



### **Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis gun teapot**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2021

Glazed ceramic, luster, steel, epoxy, and enamel paint

*Loan from the artist and the Wexler Gallery*

Roberto Lugo showcases portraits of civil rights leaders on these two teapots. He often juxtaposes figures on ceramic teapots, as he does on vases, to recontextualize these conventional vessels. The combination of figures often consists of personalities whom Lugo would like to hear engaged in conversation, as acquaintances might over a cup of tea. One teapot features a portrait of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–68), based on a police mugshot taken in 1956 during the Montgomery bus boycott, the mass protest he helped lead against racial segregation on public transit in Montgomery, Alabama. The other side of the teapot depicts John Lewis (1940–2020), King’s contemporary and a civil rights leader in his own right who later represented Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives. A portrait of Lewis also adorns a large, Lugo vase in the French drawing room.

The other teapot bears a portrait of Rosa Parks (1913–2005), “the first lady of civil rights,” who in 1955 refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. It was her refusal and arrest that sparked the bus boycott, pivotal events in the launch of the U.S. civil rights movement. While the shape of these teapots is traditional in form, Lugo replaces their spouts with gun barrels from decommissioned handguns obtained from a buyback program in Hartford, Connecticut.



View additional displays in the entry hall, dining and breakfast rooms, and French drawing room.

This label will be on view March-June



### **Good Trouble vase**

Roberto Lugo (American, b. 1981)

Philadelphia, 2020

Glazed ceramic, enamel paint

*Museum purchase, 2021 (2021.4.1–2)*

This recently acquired vase is part of Hillwood’s tradition of procuring contemporary artworks for the collection and building on Marjorie Post’s passion for ceramics. For this work, Roberto Lugo highlights the late civil rights leader and Georgia congressman John Lewis (1940–

2020), on the front, and on the reverse, portrays three influential women in politics—Vice President Kamala Harris, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and voting rights advocate and politician Stacey Abrams.

Lewis is well known for referring to his civil rights work as getting into “good trouble, necessary trouble,” hence, the title of the vase. Lugo based his portrait of Lewis on a police mugshot taken in the 1960s when Lewis’s participation in nonviolent protests against racial segregation landed him in jail. The vase’s colorful patterns reference African textiles and graffiti, while the ginger jar–shape and classical motifs along the base nod, respectively, to Chinese porcelain and ancient Greek decoration.

#### Photos on Label



*Photos by Dominic Episcopo. Courtesy of the Wexler Gallery*

Top to bottom: Portraits of Stacey Abrams, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Kamala Harris on the reverse

## THE LUXURY OF CLAY

PORCELAIN PAST AND PRESENT

### Visitor Center

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The video will be available on the second floor of the visitor center later in February.

Please watch this video to learn about the contemporary artists whose work is featured in The Luxury of Clay: Porcelain Past and Present, the exhibition in the dacha, and is also on display in the mansion.

Approximately 5 minutes, on repeat



To enjoy the video on your personal device, please scan this QR code using the camera app on your cell phone or tablet.

