

In Studio with Doris Becker

Evelyne Schoenmann



Doris, first up I like to ask my guests about their training and their ceramic background.

Art and creativity have always been a constant companion in my life. I took ceramics courses from an early age. I later enrolled at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Arlon (Belgium) and the European Art Academy in Trier (Germany) and specialized in ceramic sculpture.

You used to work with wood and stone. Is there any reason why you went on to specialize in ceramics?

Yes, I have also worked with other materials such as wood and stone and for a while I worked regularly in a collective sculpture studio in Luxembourg City.

Clay eventually became “my” material. Unlike wood or stone, where you deliberately remove material, with clay I can shape, add, etc., so it’s a completely different way of thinking and working with the material. Clay also offers me the best opportunity to realize my delicate textures.

You are always doing further training, for example in 2024 in Paris at the Cité Internationale des Arts. What do you take home with you intellectually from such residencies?

Three months in Paris, with its huge cultural offering including exhibitions in galleries and museums, is definitely personally enriching. Working in the Cité

des Arts, surrounded by art and artists from very different backgrounds, is an unforgettable experience, inspiring and educational. But international symposiums in particular have allowed me to enter into a constructive exchange with the other participants and the jurors, which has been very important for my creative development. The 2008 ceramics symposium in Gmunden was my first valuable opportunity for artistic dialogue and a real key experience.

This was followed by further invitations to symposiums and artist residencies, such as in Bechyne (Czech Republic), Boleslawiec (Poland), Dahab (Egypt), Daugavpils (Latvia) and Voglje (Slovenia)... For me as a “loner”, these are al-



ways a challenge, but also an incentive for further work.

I believe the sources for your works can be found in nature, in the field of minerals, right?

A recurring motif in my work is decay and erosion in nature. I encounter these diverse phenomena on my walks in the rural area where I live. The Müllerthal in Luxembourg is unique (a UNESCO nature and geo-park) due to its bizarre rock formations that have developed through time and natural forces. It is an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

You often hear in training courses that you have to develop a so-called "signature style". A form, a surface, etc., which viewers immediately associate with the respective artist. Fortunately, I

see very different forms in your works, egg-shaped individual pieces, wheel-shaped structures, but also sculptures. And yet you can see your signature in everything. What is your attitude to the requirement to develop a signature style?

I do think that all my sculptures, despite their different shapes, have their own unique and unmistakable signature.

I like to set themes for my work that I can then explore in more depth, such as Stones, Rolling Stones, Geodes, Circles and, finally, Origins.

The egg (Origins) is current and has been the theme of my work for some time. With its perfect shape, the egg is present in various mythologies, where it is considered the origin of the universe and a symbol of productivity, reproduc-

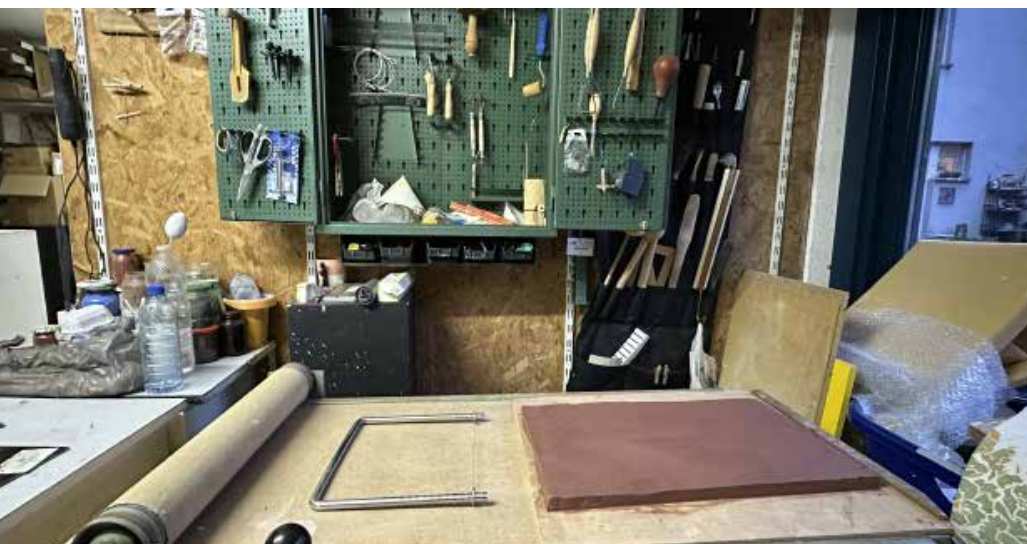
tion and the emergence of new life.

The unique shape inspires me to transform it with my own techniques - hammered ornaments, using needles or other tools, enrich the shape, but also tell of other cultures and traditions.

Through recurring specific forms of expression, a work can be attributed to a single artist. In my case, there are the same pictorial trace elements, notches and structures that form a kind of signature on the pieces.

You have now produced one of these works for us. Would you please describe the technical process from A to Z.

For this new work from the Origins series I first made porcelain engobe and coloured it with pigment. Then the engobe was applied to a plaster batt, after drying briefly it was peeled off in strips



and formed into small balls. These balls were then left to wait under plastic sheet for further processing.

Then I made the "inside", a cave-like form with different levels and recesses, where the blue balls were used. The first textures are becoming visible.

The clay slabs are made of stoneware clay on the roller, which are then pressed into the plaster moulds (2 egg halves that had already been completed).

The smaller form is then stuck in to one half and the two egg halves are joined.

Textures are created by applying stoneware engobe with oxides and various materials, by pressing and piercing with a range of utensils.

Finally the finest textures, then rest and dry before going into the kiln. I fire at 1260°C.

When I look at your work, I feel like I'm seeing erosion, eruption, destruction. The surfaces are like pumice, basaltic. Are you interested in the transience of this world?

Yes, exactly. All my works are therefore snapshots of these processes of change.

However, transience does not mean final disappearance but always involves the emergence of something new. Therefore my interest is in what remains, the journey through time of the recurring cycle in nature.

This decay with all its traces and scars is an omnipresent feature in my work.

Would you tell us something about future projects, wishes or ideas?

I am always interested in and informed about new trends and directions in art and also in ceramics. Nevertheless, it seems important to me to maintain one's own style - without constantly repeating oneself or stagnating.

One project that I am currently working on is the realization of a large installation that is planned for 2025/26. It is a variation on Fairy Rings, a mythical phenomenon in nature. I will soon be working intensively on this project in Faenza as an artist in residence.

I don't want to give away any more at the moment. Whatever happens, it



will take up my next few months. I am also still looking for suitable exhibition venues, such as parks, palaces, castles...

Suggestions are welcome.

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next
interview partner is **Andy Rogers, USA**

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