

In studio with Ioan Ioşif

Evelyn Schoenmann



Ioan, first of all: my sincere congratulations on being accepted into the International Academy of Ceramics IAC/ AIC! There's a story behind your application...

Dear Evelyn, thank you very much, I feel honoured to be a member of the IAC/ AIC! Indeed, there is a story... I usually set some goals in the beginning of every year. In 2023, taking in consideration that I was turning 30 years old, I proposed to myself to do something significant for my artistic career. That

was becoming an IAC/ AIC member. I have been in contact with a few IAC/ AIC members since 2017, when the 3rd edition of International Cluj Ceramics Biennale took place in my city. I was also a participant and got the chance of having conversations with some of participant IAC members. They impressed me during their work-presentations. Later they also offered me support by helping to find a place where I could do an internship via Erasmus+ in Germany. I consider it is important to be part of a community/

organisation that shares same goals and offers support. At the same time, it is a prestigious Academy with an important international resonance. I was very happy when I was accepted as one of its members.

I like to start my interviews with the question about the education and training of my guests. What is yours?

When it comes to ceramics, I could say that my first significant contact with the material was during the 3rd and 4th year of highschool, which were the years of specialisation at the Romulus Ladea Visual Arts Highschool of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Then I studied ceramics (Bachelor and Master of Arts) from 2013 till 2018 at the University of Art and Design in the same city. While I was a student, I took part in the Erasmus+ Programme and went abroad to study ceramics and do traineeships in Turkey (Anadolu University, Atölye Baro in Eskisehir), Italy (Accademia di Belle Arti di Macerata, Accademia di Belle Arti di Bari) and Germany (Muthesius Kunsthochschule in Kiel). After graduation I did another internship at the Galerie Werkstatt, with Ms Caroline Ruegge in Lübeck.

What comes to my mind when I look at your sculptures is: playing with positive and negative / creating a void / curvilinear negative space etc. Is there some truth in my assumptions?

Creating sculptures means for me I can put my thoughts in some kind of order. I often think about these types of compositions, sometimes right before I sleep. Then I could dream of "playing" with these forms, arranging, rearranging them until they become balanced. I like to think that life itself looks like a wavy line. With its ups and downs, life goes on. And we as humans, we move forward no matter what. This is in our nature, to develop ourselves, to explore. The dynamics of the individual in the world are influenced by decisions. I take this subject as an inspiration for most of my sculptures. All these positive and negative lines and



forms symbolise the course of things and we are being part of it. The eroded marbled look-alike surfaces suggest the relation with time. As if they have been exposed to weather conditions for a long time.

A colleague of ours once said: "We ceramists do a kind of alchemy". Do you think that's true?

Well, in this case I must make an analogy and think about my grandparents. They were farmers and they did agriculture by working their land basically

by hand, without the help of machines. They had a strong relationship with the earth, let's say. In Transylvania, people from the countryside say that earth is like gold... It is very precious. If you work on it, respect it, it will give you something back. I personally think the same about ceramic materials. Working with it, understand it, it could "open up" to you, so you are able to model it into something spectacular and of a great value. A professor of mine also once said something similar: "Ceramics is actually the nearest field to alchemy, when an object

is fired in the kiln, then also our spirit is firing with it..." I believe both of them are right. When we ceramists are working very intensively with these materials, when even our soul gets involved in it. In my opinion ceramics should not be underestimated, it is a wonder material. It is just us only that must discover it and its real potential.

Would you guide us through the making process of your sculpture please.

The process begins with making a prototype form out of plaster, then



the plaster moulds. Then I prepare the sheets out of black and white porcelain (or other ceramic materials) and I press them into these moulds. When I get the six pieces (walls) ready, I assemble them together in a way that the motif on their surfaces intersects at all the edges. After the piece is ready constructed, I wait for it to be leather hard and then I start scrapping the surfaces by using metal tools. For its last touch I intervene with a sand blaster on its surfaces to obtain the organic graphic effect of black and white porcelain. In order to create its "foot" I threw on the wheel a piece out of the same two types of material. Once the two pieces are bisque fired, I apply a layer of ready-made glaze (fluid glaze from Botz Pro/ Saphirblau in this case) on the surface of the wavy-like motif. The pieces are high fired at 1200 °C. For the final step, I assembly the pieces by gluing them with transparent silicone. The base is made out wooden board.

I guess one could create the relief surface design also with shellac resist or by carving in leatherhard clay. What is the reason you prefer using moulds?

I work with self-made plaster moulds

mostly when it comes to sculptures that are made of multiple layers of ceramic materials. Technically is the only way to create such works. Freely modelling it without using these moulds would not lead to the same result. There is also the advantage of creating series of pieces that look similar, just that I use different materials for each of them.

Please tell us about your 2023 solo show in Greven called: Time Capsule – Part of a Journey

This solo exhibition has been also on my list of goals for 2023 and it felt amazing when the chairman of the Kunstverein Greven, Stephan Kube, informed me we can organise it. With this occasion I wish to express my gratitude to his wife who put me in contact with him and to all the advisory board members. They have all been very kind, helpful and involved in organising this event. The title of the exhibition has to do with the passage of time. Immediately after completing my Master studies in 2018, I started working on this series of works, already planning a big solo show. This project was extended due to the outbreak of the Covid virus. At the same time, it was a beneficial thing

because it taught me to be patient with myself and to invest energy only in the realization of works that I most liked. I was happy when this opportunity arose. I prepared the ceramic works for some time and had the impression that I was bringing them into that light as if they had been kept away for a long time, like in a time capsule. The exhibition took place and the capsule had finally opened. Immediately after my establishment in Germany in 2018, I had a feeling of being on a great adventure... A journey into the unknown. In the meantime, I realize that this journey is still continuing, and I just find myself in the beginning of it, discovering, evolving and adapting myself to a new type of lifestyle.

What are your plans for 2024 and the coming years?

Working with ceramics is like preparing for an ultra-marathon... I say this because I was a running athlete for some years during my teenage time. For me ceramics also means discipline. You must train yourself to become better at it. It takes time and lots of effort. Now I have the feeling of being at the start line. I need to concentrate also on dosing



my energy in order to achieve my goals. Therefore, I am not in a rush. I just want to be more active/present as a ceramic artist from now on. In 2024, I would like to participate in one or two group exhibitions and also take part in international events with some of my sculptures. Looking back, in 2023 I participated at the Blanc de Chine International Ceramic Award. In the past few years I have also received some awards (Youth Award at the CCB 2019, Special Mention in the Youth category in Castellamonte, 2022). For the coming years I am planning to be more active on the international artistic stage. At the same time, I consider it is important also to be more present in the German artistic community.

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview partner is

Tineke van Gils, The Netherlands

Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist, writer and curator. She is an AIC / IAC member and lives and works in Basel, Switzerland.

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