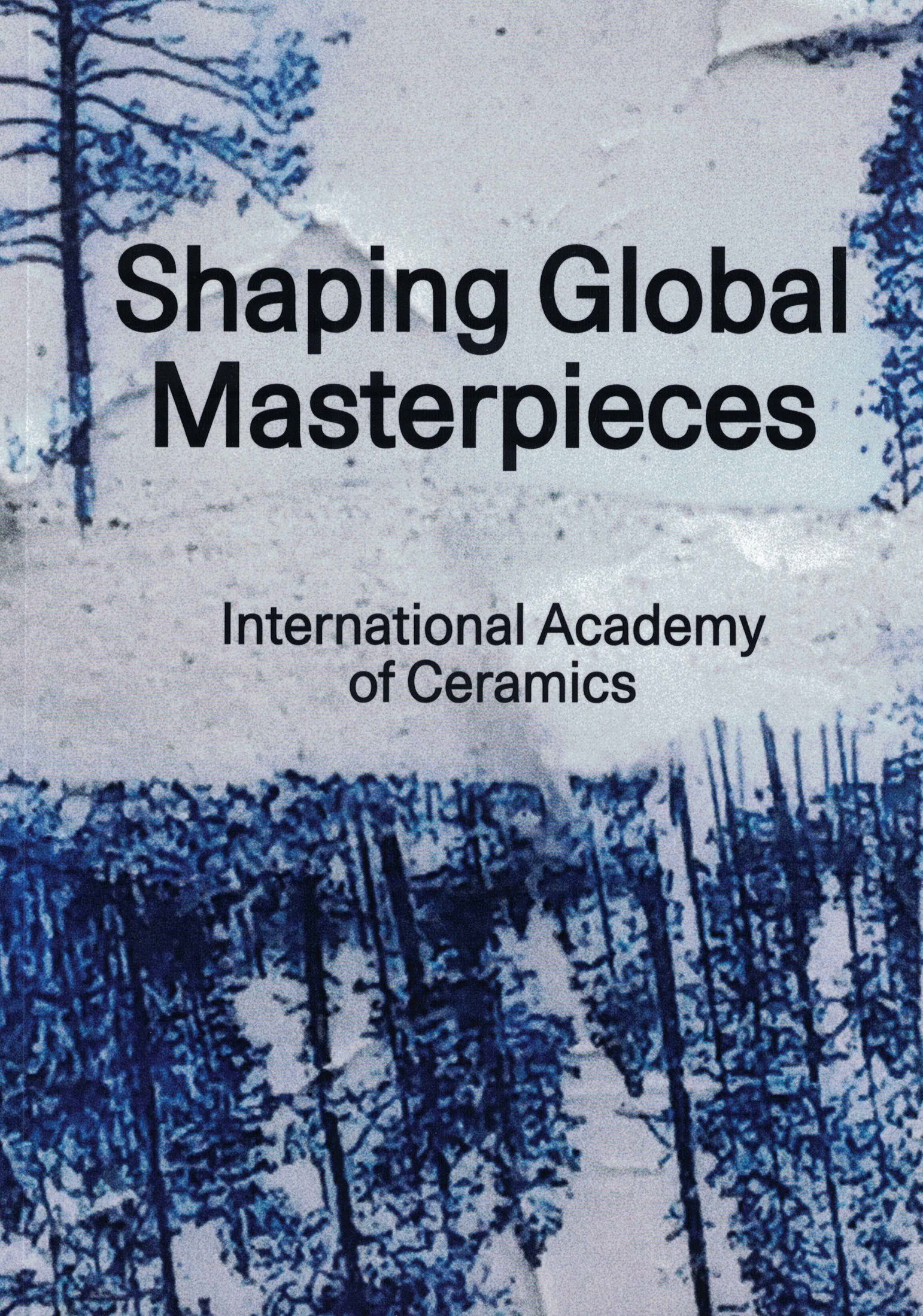




Shaping Global Masterpieces

International Academy
of Ceramics

Evelyne Schoenmann

Switzerland

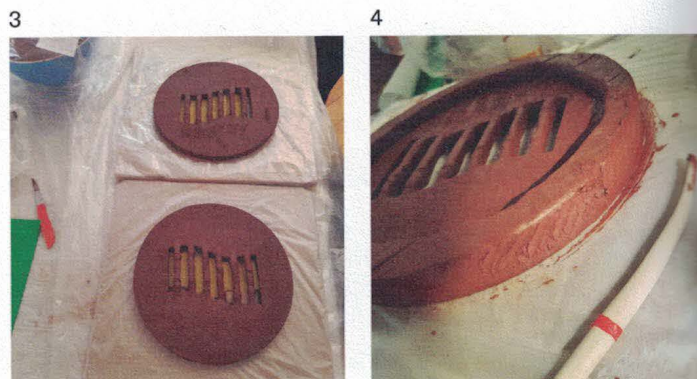
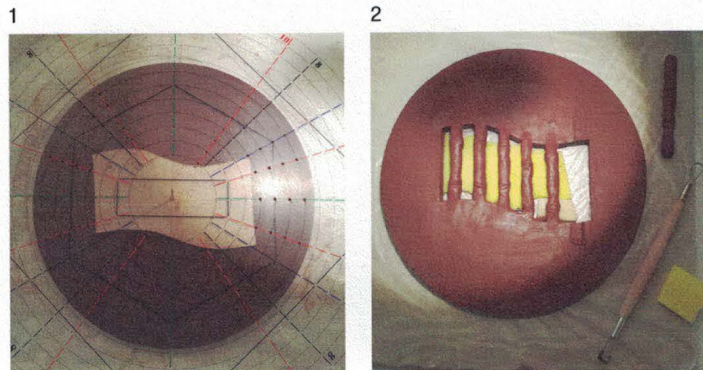


Echoes in Clay: Ritual Forms and Contemporary Reverence

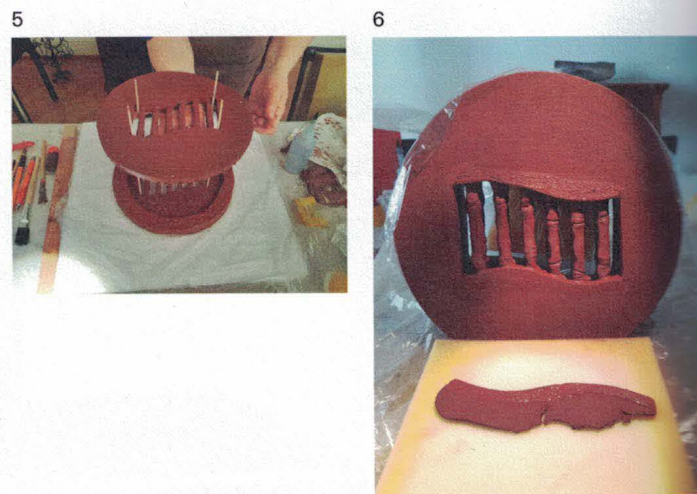
My portfolio currently consists of four series. I have been working for the *Wheels (Bi-Discs)*, *Tripots* and *Tea Culture* series for more than 20 years. Below I show process images from the *Bi-Disc* and the *Tripot* series:

Bi-disc

I first came across the Ceremonial Discs in the famous exhibition *Cina. Nascita di un Impero* in Rome. Those *Bi-Discs*, given by the emperor to high officials as a rank badge and laid into their graves after their death, fascinated me. After researching the theme, I discovered other ritual discs, for instance from the Liangzhu culture and from the Maya. The discs were originally made of jade, bronze, or other materials. The basic inspiration in the process pictures below is the *Bi-Disc* just mentioned above. The *Bi-Disc* shown here is based on the windows in the enclosing wall of the temples in Taiwan. Bamboo struts carved out of stone can be seen in these recesses, providing a view of the temple gardens. I work with black-firing Spanish clay (GRES NT Negro) with 0.2 mm grog and I start by rolling out two round slabs of the same size. Using a template, I cut out the wave-like window opening. Now I shape the bamboo struts according to nature and place them in the approximately 1 cm long recesses prepared on the back of the two panels above and below the respective window opening. It is important here that I work quickly, because the struts must not be too wet or too dry during the shaping process. They must not sag during assembly, as there is a high risk of cracks between the "window sill" and the open surface (1, 2, 3, 4).



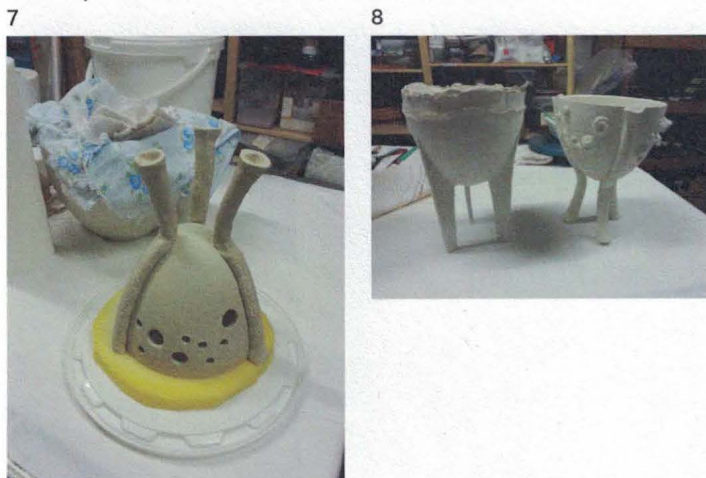
Positioning the second panel precisely on the edge of the first is quite tricky. The two window openings and the bamboo struts have to be positioned exactly on top of each other so that no displacement is visible from the front. So, I insert a wooden grill skewer into each of the four outermost window corners of the lower panel and guide the upper panel downwards along the skewers. Then I fit the framing around the "window". Until three years ago, I still had a studio in the middle of an olive grove in Italy. There I could easily fire my pieces in the open pit in an archaic way, which I would love to do with the *Bi-Discs*. Today I fire in an electric kiln, usually without glaze. I work with exceptional high-firing clays, which in themselves produce beautiful, earth-coloured results (5, 6).



Tripot

I find the inspiration for the Ceremonial Vessels with, among others, the Chinese wine drinking vessels of the 9th century AC, Zhou Dynasty Occidental and Zhou Oriental, the Qin- and the Han-Occidental Dynasty, in the Ancient Egyptian Art, and in the Orientalia departments of the museums.

Below are two examples of my implementation of the tripod idea ^(7, 8):



All my tripods are formed by hand or in a mould. The above tripod was produced with the Australian porcelain Southern Ice. Cotton wool, soaked in slip of the same porcelain, is inserted into the holes and fuse with them during high firing ⁽⁹⁾.



Below: The black-and-white *Tripot*, of whose making process you can see a section of photos below, was made with the same Spanish black-firing clay as the *Bi-Disc* at the beginning of this article ^(10, 11).

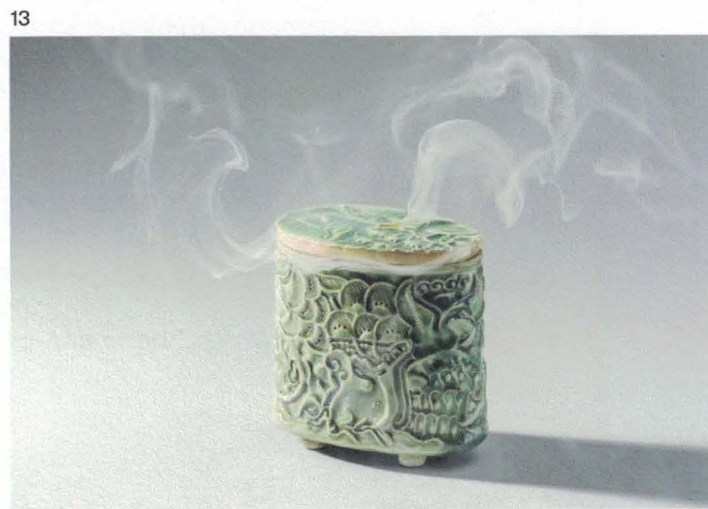


For the marbled rim, ⁽¹²⁾ I experimented with a mix of the black clay and Southern Ice porcelain, which created a nice coloration and texture. The feet are always the trickiest part of the tripod. I tried many different leg forms and learned a lot during this process, and also produced a few funny, un-showable sculptures when the thin legs became crooked in the kiln. I ended up doing best with a plaster mould and long drying phases. To prevent the tripods from distortion during high firing, I support the vessels with lots of kiln supports.



Tea Culture

The tea culture in Southeast Asia has completely captivated me. In Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, I learnt that tea cultures couldn't be more different. I don't want to imitate or copy tea ware from these countries, so I try to express my reverence with my own patterns, surfaces, and shapes. My tea sets are designed to appeal to all the senses and contain all the utensils needed for a tea ceremony. This includes entire tea sets such as teapots, water containers, tea caddies, as well as vases and flower arrangements to delight the eye and incense burners to stimulate the senses. When I think about it, my *Bi-Discs* could also make a wonderful display as works of art in a tea set ⁽¹³⁾.



(13) Incense Burner



Biography

I am a ceramist, curator, and author. I am a member of the International Academy of Ceramics, since 2017. For several years I was Advisory Board Member of the Potters Council of the American Ceramic Society ICAN (former ACeRS) as well as Board Member of the swissceramics association. I regularly organize international symposia with the ceramics group Diagonal11, which I founded in 2016, and I organise and manage exhibitions around the world for international artists. My work is internationally published, exhibited, and collected.

Many visits to South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan have strongly inspired and influenced my work. I am thinking in particular of the rituals present in everyday life, the traditions in these countries, the connection with the ancestors in religion and the beautiful architecture. And of course, the traditional dresses, which are works of art in themselves.

I recently started a fourth series, which I call *Mechanical Parts*. So — stay tuned.

www.schoenmann-ceramics.ch