

# In Studio with Agnes Husz

*When Agnes works on her narrow strips of clay, it looks as if she were using ribbons for weaving with because of the playful way she makes them fly through the air. Here, she shows us how she joins up these elongated strips to make a water sculpture.*

Evelyne Schoenmann

**A**gnes, you are Hungarian and you live in Japan. An encounter of East and West. How did all this start?

Yes, a lot of people are interested in how a European came to live in this exotic Far Eastern country. Especially when she is a ceramist. Because of its wonderful traditional pottery culture, Japan is especially exciting. Many people come here to experience this at first hand. For myself, I did not have to choose this pathway, on the contrary, I might say Japan chose me, through my husband, who is a Japanese artist. This is where the encounter between East and West started for me.

and to mix it with all the things that we have always carried around with us. After my first impressions of Japan, I came into different surroundings, which accelerated the crystallisation of these new experiences. In 1993, I spent three months on a bursary at the European Ceramics Work Center, the EKWC, the most important time in my professional development. It was there that I laid the foundations of what I do today. That was the moment I discovered my East-Western self. What I had brought from Europe was my concept of form and creating, rooted in my home town of Mohacs, a historical town famous for its traditions and its black earthen-

movements at the same time. To me it resembles a painter's brushstroke: I imagine I am making three-dimensional scribbles.

*Your portfolio includes tableware, pots for the tea ceremony and sake, but also installations and sculptures. Which of these designs do you prefer?*

When I discovered this entirely new technique, I decided to use it to make functional pots too. Thanks to the Japanese flower and tea culture, I can simply transform these sculptures into the objects for the tea ceremony or into the forms of a vase. In Japan, these objects are abstract per se.



*Do you bring together the two philosophies in your works?*

That is an interesting and very important question. I think that in the creative process, the surroundings play a crucial role. It was with a sense of joy that I gave myself up to the transformative force of the Japanese surroundings in my creative artistic process. I could do this with no great effort, it is really enough to be receptive with all the senses, to breathe it in

ware. Japan taught me how to bring this idea of making together with its natural beauty.

*If we look closely at your work, we see movement everywhere. There is no rigidity, just movement in every direction. Would you like to tell the viewer a story with your work?*

Yes, the clay strips flow, pulsate, envelop forms or reveal them – two opposed

*In our series of images, you are working on a spiral-shaped piece. Can you walk us through the steps involved?*

The technique I use to make my pots is fundamentally different from traditional ceramics. What is the finishing phase there is the first one for me. I start with the colour and with shaping the surface. First of all, I imagine the colour and form of the finished object and only then do I start work. I never make a sketch. If I

did that, the work would lose its attraction for me.

As you can see in the first picture, I apply the images and colours that I had imagined on the rolled-out clay strip, which is about one-and-a-half centimetres wide. In this case, I paint on vertical black and white stripes. In the next step, I cut a strip of the desired width from the slab and I make it long and thin by throwing it in the air and letting it flutter without using any other tools.

What is going on here? The method is based on a physical phenomenon, that the surface of the clay strip is harder than its middle and can thus not withstand stretching. The surface breaks up and cracks appear. Actually this kind of surface treatment is not new in our line of work, but it is new that a strip prepared in this way forms the basic element of a form in space.

In the fourth image, you can see the upper spiral form being made. As long as I am able to pick the form up, I roll it along the clay strip. Later, I pick up the strip and

on to form the object with wide strips at the sides that are made in the same way as I have already described. For the composition of the individual elements, it was very important to adapt the wide strips to the form in advance, like cutting out a dress pattern, that is to say the strip that has just been stretched out straight needs to be curved like a segment of a cape.

In my work, I integrate the composition of colours and surfaces, I only use glaze sporadically. The state of incompleteness, the imperfection is part of the composition. In the work process, the natural reaction of the material is the most important tool in my hands. This leads to a harmony of material, form and idea. It is my greatest pleasure when this message reaches the viewer. Any fine-grained, malleable, plastic clay or porcelain is suitable for this technique. For colour, I use engobe under the glaze. I fired this piece here at 1250°C in reduction in my oil-fired kiln.

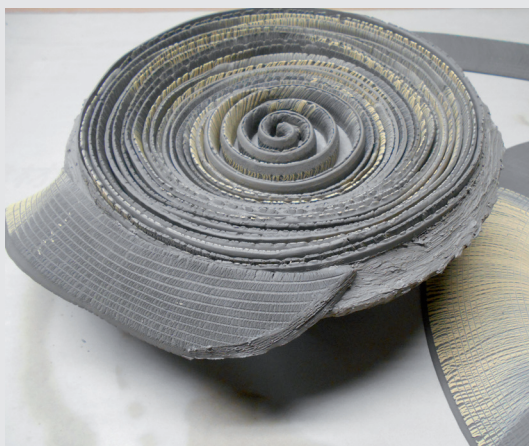
*Am I right in thinking that spiral-*

theme. Imaginary circles flow beneath the surface of the water. Depending on the surroundings, the lighting and the reflections, the viewer always sees something different. At rest, it is silence. And when the surface ripples, it is never-ending movement.

*What will we be seeing from you in future?*

As a rule I have four solo exhibitions in Japan in the salons of major department stores or in private galleries. I also take part in exhibitions judged by a panel of experts.

In the autumn, I am exhibiting at the Kakiden Gallery, in December in the salon of the Tokyu department store in Nagano. In 2017, the Josai University (Mizuno Museum of Art, Tokyo Josai University) is organising my exhibition. This is especially exciting because this famous and architecturally very special space will give me a new source of inspiration. I will be exhibiting mainly sculptures for my audience there.



guide it along the object. The condition of the strip is soft or hard, depending on requirements. To stick the individual layers together, I use a simple toothbrush. The wet toothbrush roughens up the surface and moistens it. This is important to stick the layers together and this is how the slip, which is used as the glue, is applied. The closely packed thin layers take up the biggest area of the piece. One layer is approximately 4-5 millimetres. I then went

*shaped objects fascinate you?*

This element, which is familiar as an ancient symbol, is familiar in all areas of life, from the smallest cell to infinite cosmic space. The basis for my work, the matrix, was created by the spiral-shaped objects that I made in the EKWC studios: small snail forms a few centimetres across or whirlpool objects that are a metre in diameter. I keep returning to this theme. This piece is also a continuation of the

AGNES HUSZ  
Hungary and Japan  
[aha20agi@gmail.com](mailto:aha20agi@gmail.com)  
<http://www.agneshusz.com/>

Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview will be with **Laura Silvagni (Italy)**. Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist. She lives and works in Basel, Switzerland and Liguria, Italy. [www.schoenmann-ceramics.ch](http://www.schoenmann-ceramics.ch)