

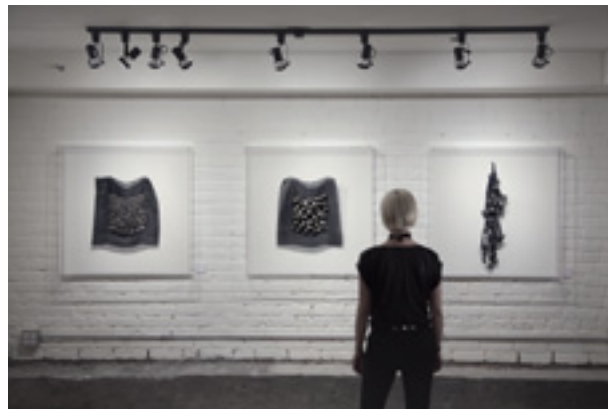
J A P O N

photography / Martin Tremblay
words / Danielle Dzumaga

France Goneau's celebrated ceramics show their versatility, hanging off the human body instead of the gallery walls.



You could be mistaken for thinking that France Goneau was a jewellery designer and that her latest collection 'Japon' was intended to dangle around a model's neck. Instead, the Canadian-French ceramist is simply open to viewing her work from another angle. These images 'give the pieces an all new artistic expression', says the artist, which should satisfy Goneau's liberal attitude for nurturing individual interpretations of her own work. She deliberately wants to alter your perspective of the ceramic arts, a mandate that echoes qualities of the material she works with. Clay has the potential to be continually remodelled before it is set to fire in the kiln; the form is only fixed after it has been heated. The relationship between art and its mutable and fickle cousin, fashion is comparable, as the possibility for shifting appearances in both are limitless.



The collection is the product of Goneau's time as an artist in residence at the *Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park* in Japan, and displayed back at home at '*À table tout le monde*' gallery in Montreal, Quebec. Normally she thinks bigger, working with larger murals that cover the expanse of a wall, for which she has won accolades. One of her tiles achieved first prize at the *Elit-Tile International Ceramic Tile Triennial 2010*, a major exhibition featuring more than 350 tiles from 91 countries. 'Japon' is an experiment in smaller forms, as she 'wanted people to appreciate the work from closer'. The pieces are flexible, in her own words, they are 'objects with an unpredictable and moving dynamic', attached to the gallery wall by only two nails.





Photographer / Martin Tremblay for Pinch
@ lepinch.com
Art Ceramist & Styling / France Goneau
Make Up / Julian Cargnello
Hair / Raphael Estrella
Photo Assistant / Carlos Viani
Retouch / Pinch
Words / Danielle Dzumaga

Within them is the potential for a different combination than the one the artist has produced.

Inspired by the mobility of the pieces, it was the decision of photographer Martin Tremblay to feature the ceramic wall art as jewellery, with Goneau playing tailor to help pin and secure her art to the body, the heat of which transforms the clay once again. Long before, in the artist's studio, allusions to fashion and a 'wearable art' were being formed as Goneau began to feed black and white ribbon through her handcrafted ceramic breezeblocks and sewed them secure. She played with the two materials together, searching for a balance between 'their forms and shadows' to eventually create what appears to be her 'human ornaments' of fabric and porcelain. But for Goneau, the allusion to fashion is inevitable, given her predilection for all forms of adornment.

Talking about this collection, she reveals how she developed 'methods of decoration on the unglazed surface' to produce a 'luxurious' finish to each of her small creations. The height of her new decorative method is in the bronze lacquer on whitewashed porcelain that appears to gleam like a sand dollar. Each handcrafted piece comes hot off the kiln like a batch of rough gems, combining the elegance of natural pattern and the coarseness of urbanised landscapes. Taking up Goneau's invitation to look closer at these works, I can see the detail of marbling veins in the recesses of one wall hanging, others look pockmarked by the weather or have a biscuity texture and there are glimpses of a ruddy sandstone beneath one piece.

It's hard to mark the point at which the art becomes fashion, and where they collide. But references like this, where clear definitions are hard to muster, are essential to the artist's strategy. Not your usual gift shop porcelain, the value of this work is in its ability to stimulate your curiosity. The small sculptures are reproductions of what we can see in both natural and manmade forms. But before you imagine a collection of miniaturized landmarks of the snow-globe variety, her work is far more than mere imitation. Primarily, Goneau deals in implication as delicate as the material she is working with, she takes elements that inspire her, and applies a process of 'extracting and reconstructing' until the source is reduced to a hint of a shell or the shadow of a window frame. It is like reading in a foreign language and coming across a word that resembles one of your own. Subtlety is everything to her: 'my goal is to communicate such ideas, thoughts, or feelings without revealing everything. I like it to be ambiguous'. Ultimately, viewing Goneau's work is not a passive process. Instead it requires the viewer to sort through the jigsaw of references and enter into a guessing game to which she welcomes the myriad interpretations that are drawn up.

France Goneau is due to appear on the line-up for *The Artist Project* first in Toronto, Canada and then New York City, USA in March 2011.
