

CERAMIC REVIEW

The Magazine of Ceramic Art and Craft
Issue 251 September/October 2011 £6.30

www.ceramicreview.com



Mette Maya
Gregerson



ROD HARRIS
Public Brick Art

ASHRAF HANNA
Manipulating Volume

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**CERAMIC
REVIEW**

Any Road Will Take You There



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Mette Maya Gregersen reveals her search for some place, some thing, to give her balance and unity.

Working with clay is a necessity for me. From an early age clay has been a material that informs and reaffirms my identity. I have never felt like I belong anywhere and so the making process has become both a search for, and an escape from, my environment. I think this is why my work has developed in two distinct directions: the result of conflicts and questions that resolve themselves in forms that embody a sense of balance and unity.

I work in two quite different ways. One is the making of waves and the other is constructing. One is loose and wild, the other is fine and measured – similar to how I live my life, drifting off and trying to disappear in response to staying strong and building my home.

WAVES In one process the clay is formed on a wood-based shape; in its soft state it wraps to the surface, picking up the texture and form in a fluid arc. The wave is reflecting the constant movement, how nothing stays the same but is influenced by time. It is the reflection of something material, transforming in the firing as the wood burns away to leave a wave-like memory, a solid fragment of something fluid and ephemeral. Our life experiences change us, leaving lasting marks, but the 'solid' moment of experience is gone forever. I have travelled many places in search of something, only to find that each place leaves nothing but a fleeting impression. It is these fleeting moments that find permanent form in my wave work.

Every form is a response to an experience. In my world I struggle to see what is truly there before it has been through a clay transformation: only then does it make sense to me. Otherwise it's just a mess with chaotic thoughts and unconnected impressions.

CONSTRUCTIONS After a while of working in fragments and burning away, I feel the need to construct pieces. This is an organic process, building slowly, using strips of clay that are first torn apart, then carefully wrapped around each other and put together. It is like plastering an invisible broken bone – a form that reveals itself as the clay is worked around and upwards.

Every form is a response
to an experience

Every action in clay refers back to a mental state. There has to be a connection between thought, hand, and space, where each element investigates the other and creates a channel of communication. If I repeatedly fall into the same black hole, then I will investigate that path, how I got there, and how I can get back up again (the piece *Back on Track* is a response to this).

THE HUMAN DIMENSION The work is also an investigation into social identity as I represent a small part of human behaviour. It can be a question of how our response to emotional situations changes and influences us. At the end of the day it all makes sense – a little piece of history with each piece marking a milestone from the past. They have all been a subject of change and a question of defining time. What happens in between is the inspiration. I work to find



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My family and friends get left behind while the relationship with the work is underway



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2 *Back on Track*, stoneware clay, paper, molochite, 2011, H54cm (Photo: Jacob Haugen Sørensen) **3** *Twisted Wave*, stoneware, porcelain, acrylic fibre, molochite, 2009, H60cm (Photo: KP foto) **4** *Tango Turning*, stoneware, paperclay, 2010, H39cm (Photo: KP foto)

Exhibitions *The Danish Biennial*, Kolding, until 30 October 2011; *Origin*, Old Spitalfields Market, 22-28 September 2011; *KiC, Arts and Crafts Fair*, Århus, 3-5 November 2011
Stockists European Makers, Amsterdam; The Garden Gallery, Stockbridge, UK; Silkeborg Kunstnerhus, Denmark

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balance between my spontaneous nature and the responsibility of being an artist and a mother.

The mixing of clay and glazes is all part of the process, but for me it is not the most interesting part. You need to know something of the composition and chemistry of materials in order to achieve consistency, but there is something that happens, something much richer and more rewarding, when you respond intuitively to the accidental discoveries – releasing oneself from the certainties of the ‘tried and tested’ that breathe life into the making, drying, glazing, and firing of the work.

BREAKING THE RULES Mixing earthenware and stoneware glazes together, letting go of control of the outcome, and welcoming an element of surprise are an essential part of my work. Each piece is fired several times. I live with the pieces between firings; like renewed relationships with old friends it takes time to know them again, to understand how they look and feel, and what might be required to make the form and surface inseparable from, and essential to, each other. Each firing, re-glazing, and re-firing uniquely affects both surface and form until the work finally ‘feels’ complete.

I love the feel of clay and the immediate response of the material. When building up a piece of work, I become intensely absorbed, an intimacy which leaves no room for compromise – and by that I mean that the people closest to me, my family and friends, get left behind while the relationship with the work is underway. What is wrong with me? Being totally absorbed: how can I describe that? Lost in a world that builds itself around the making process, and finding the physical form of that world manifest itself in the clay, is what makes the structure and gives it energy. Each work is a culmination of possibilities and exists only because I make it real.

I’m sure that despite not knowing where I am going, and with all of life’s detours and unknown destinations, I’m on the right track. ☞

