

A clay based practice

Public and studio clay works that have been
done between China and Switzerland

Léandre Burkhard, 2019

Artist statement

Clay is the common denominator of my work, and I explore it in two different directions:

In public contexts, it is a tool of communication, reflecting my surrounding environment and society.

In studio practice, I use clay to create sculptural objects.

My projects oscillate between East and West, technique and concept, aesthetic objects and human relations.

Urban Wheel

In cooperation with Zhou Xinyi

*Wheel in the urban context,
Jingdezhen, Taoxichuan, 2018*

As I can't use this machine alone to turn a bowl, I have to ask people to help me set it in motion. In this way the wheel becomes more than a mere "production tool", it acquires the status of a "communication tool". Asking for the collaboration from the people around wherever I set up the wheel, I have the opportunity to discover persons from different horizons.

I strike up interesting conversations with strangers. During each meeting, the path of my life crosses the one of a stranger. We discuss and exchange ideas during the time she or he helps me. When the bowl is finished, our lives go back to each of our daily activities. The bowl materializes the shared moment.





*Screenshots from the movie Urban wheel
Hangzhou, 2018*

Ruins

End of the afternoon, farmers and workers are going back home. He came on a tricycle, wearing a pink apron. He was too busy to stop; he needed to go water his garden. Yet he helped me for a bowl.

Market

When we started, a lot of people gathered around the wheel. They started to discuss about how this machine works. They gave me advice on how I could improve it.

Bridge

I ask him to help me but he was too busy to help.

Nothing came out





*Bowls were presented with the stories, the urban wheel
and a movie of the meetings*

“In-transition”

One day, bulldozers started to destroy the area where I was living. I discovered how this process of destruction on a large scale becomes a working place for all kinds of people. They come to scavenge and salvage all the remains of this portion of society. Some retrieve metal others collect wood, bricks or any other material.... Being part of this destruction/construction process is, in a way, being part of a transitional state, wherein simple castaway matter is resurrected with a new purpose.

Most of these salvaged materials find a new life far from what we can imagine. In the wake of this transitional process, I built ephemeral totems while houses around me were falling down. My constructions often lasted just a few days, before the bricks were taken away to be used by somebody else in a different place.



*Abandoned (in-transition) brics,
Zhuantang, 2016*



A construction made when being surrounded by falling buildings



Local workers collecting different materials from the ruins

A last tea in Zhuantang

Before Zhuantang village was totally destroyed and before tall towers and big shopping malls grow, let's use these bricks to build a teahouse in the middle of the ruins and drink a last cup of tea together. We all lived here, it's a way to say goodbye to this place that will always be a part of our life.





After few days, the structure was still here and a band of kids use it as a play field



The Ptolemaic Model

Maybe you remember playing that game with other kids in parks and getting horrible nauseas just for fun. I use it as a potters wheel but inverse the process and turn around the clay. The human orbits earth.



*Screenshots, Kids park
Switzerland, 2019*

Walks

This work is made by dragging an object around and using this process of erosion to shape it. Each walk will erode the object in a different way according to the path chosen and the time spent walking around. The ephemeral trace left behind is the result of the erosion that makes the ceramic object slowly disappear.

When the piece was presented in an exhibition space, to my surprise visitors spontaneously started to drag it or even dance with it.



*Bisc-fired ceramic and a
two hours walk, 2017*



Eroded object after a walk



*Walking for hours on the same pattern,
an infinity loop appear slowly on the
ground.*

Studio mobile

Take clay out of the studio, travelling around with a tricycle and built ephemeral random clay shapes along the road. Create a connection with local people through clay.







Mudflow

*clay and body, exhibition "Under the table",
2019*

For this project I have invited two contact improvisation contemporary dancers, to perform on a big and soft surface of clay. Their movements were imprinted onto the clay during the entire performance.

The clay has memorized the energy of the dance.
Dancers: Daniel and Xiaoling, camera:
Nipapa

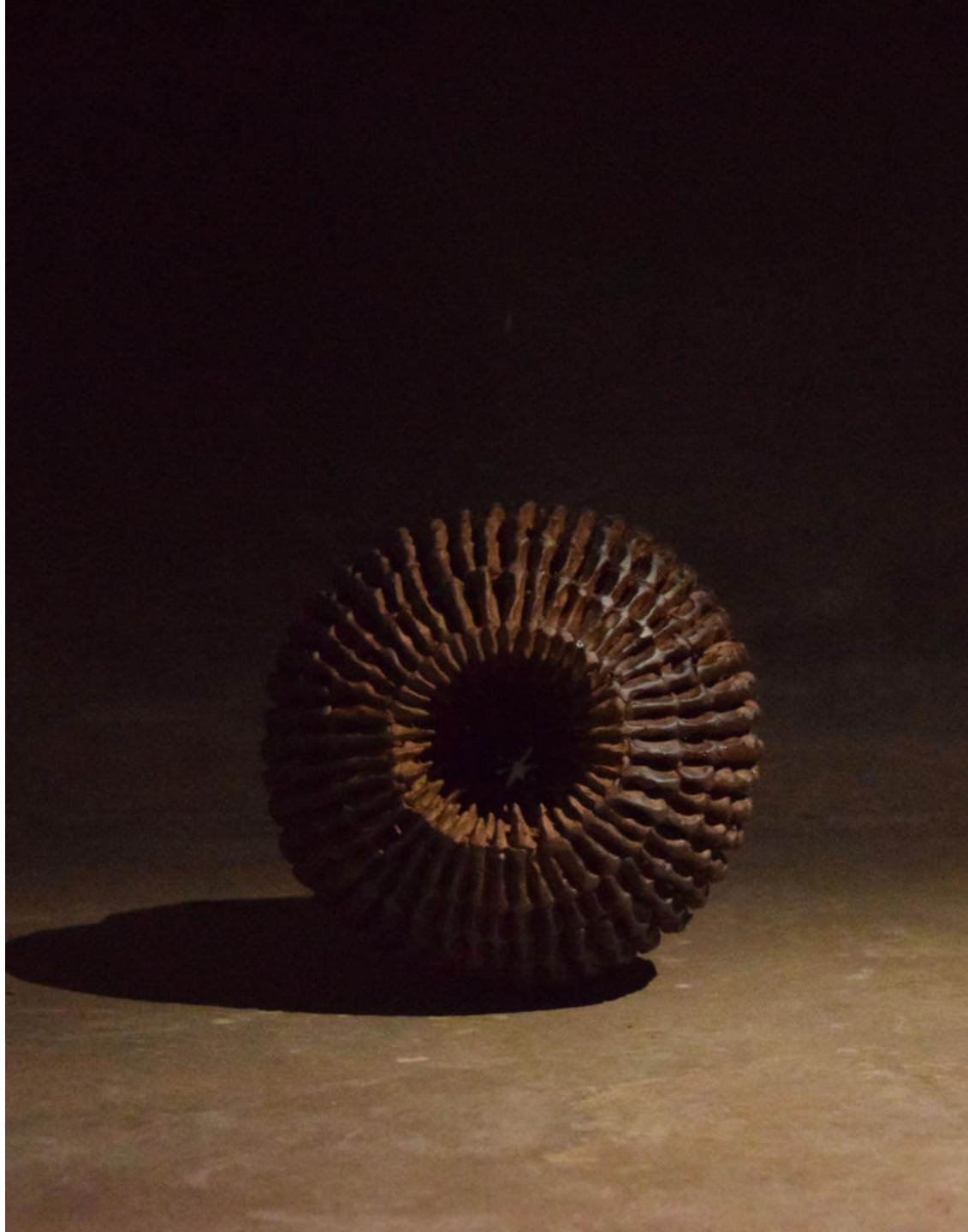




Dark structures

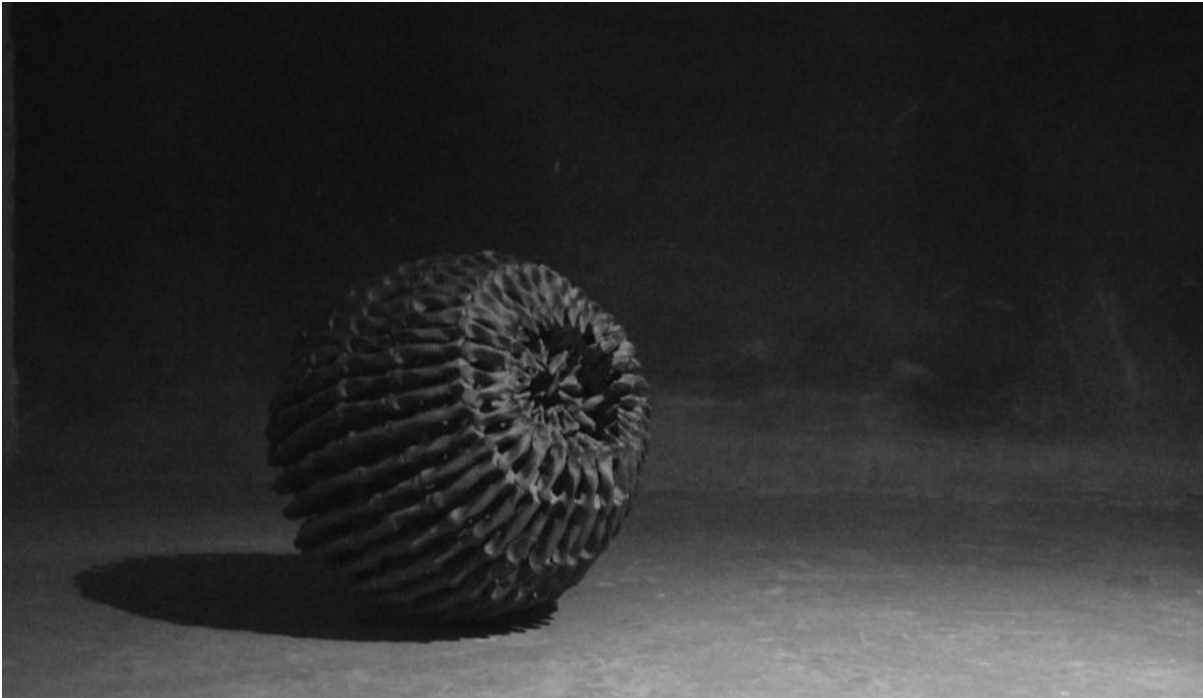
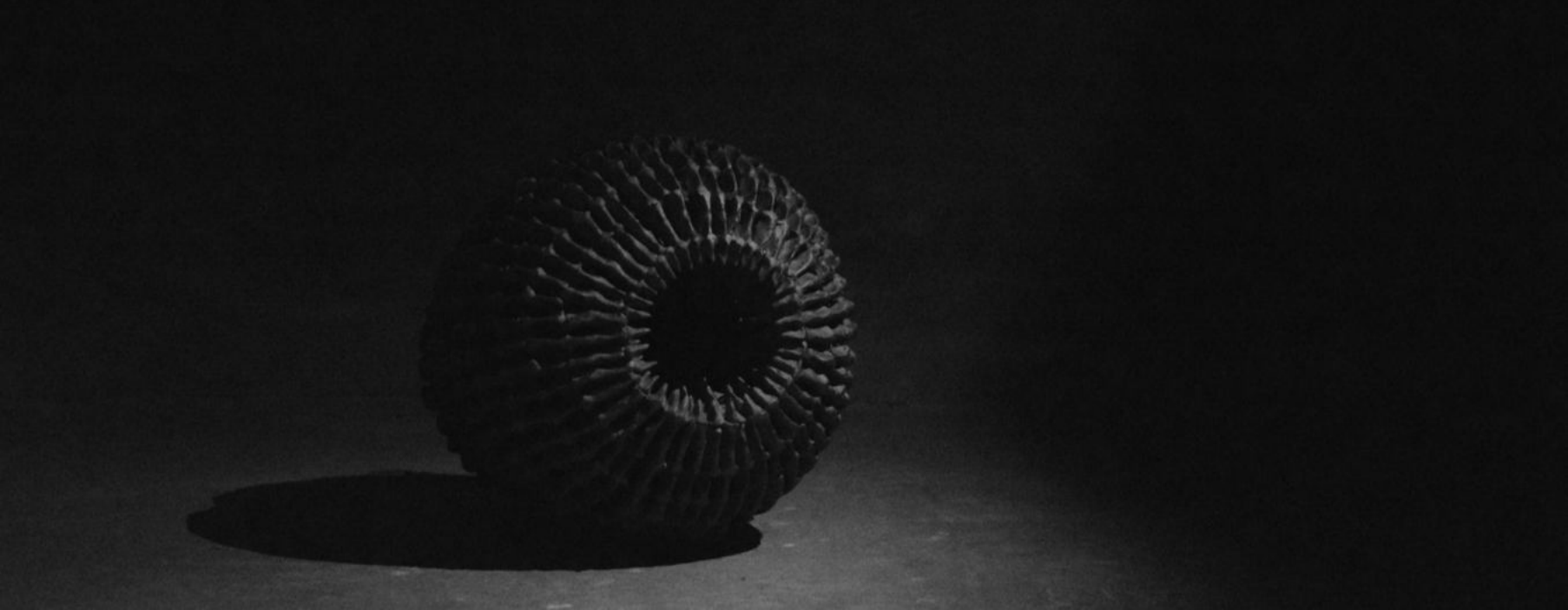
Thousands of small elements are combined together to create a superstructure that becomes a massive entity with a strong visual impact. There is a dialogue between a dense black object and the transparency of the structures. The softness of the clay and the way I pinch each element individually creates the plastic quality of the piece.

*Handbuild stoneware
and oxydes*





Unfinished pieces in the studio



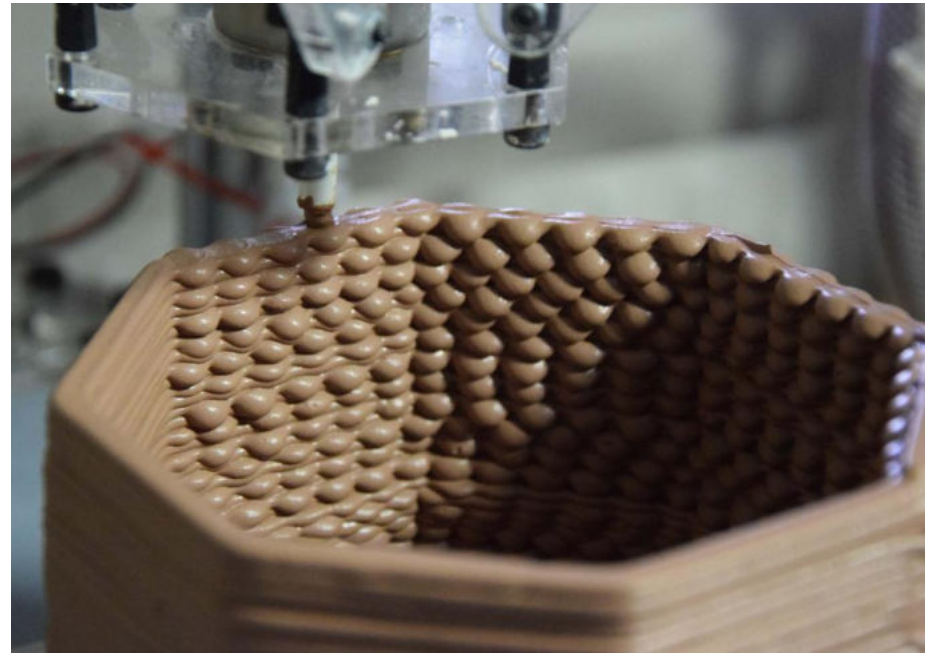


*Hangzhou International Contemporary
Ceramic Biennale, 2016*

Relics

This work is the codification of four poems printed in clay. The poems will last forever thanks to this medium. The memory of our culture will be passed down for thousands of years. I chose to bury the poems in different places in the hope that future civilizations will find them.

This series evolved after a three-year research project on ceramic 3D printing





*3D printed stoneware and porcelain/ clay slip serigraphy,
CAA graduation exhibition 2017*

Curriculum Vitae

Léandre Burkhard, Ceramist

Born in Switzerland in 1979

Swiss citizen

Professional background

2017-currently	Ceramic teacher, international relations coordinator, China Academy of Art, College of Crafts, Hangzhou
2013 – 2015	Deputy director, Art Department, Tangshan Industrial Technical Vocational College (TSGZY), China
2007 - 2013	Ceramic art and design teacher, TSGZY, China

Education

2014 –2017	Master in art « China academy of fine Art », Hangzhou (research on ceramic 3D printing)
1999 - 2003	Ceramic art and design education, Vevey applied art school
1996 - 1998	Biology laboratory assistant apprenticeship, Agroscope, Changins

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