

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PROCESS: FROM PATCHWORK TO PORCELAIN

LYNN FRYDMAN KUHN



Fish a Kiss

I create ceramics as if they were textiles. I sew flat cleaning sponges together to make soft patchwork moulds for porcelain slip. There is a direct and visible correlation between the shape and the patchwork surface of the finished piece and the yielding sponge mould. A fabrication process has been developed to transform the cellulous fabric into porcelain objects.

My work is the result of years of experimentation. I embrace the effects that come from using atypical techniques. For me, the process is just as important as the end product to give character to my pieces. I want the viewers to be surprised and curious when they look at my ceramics. I want them to wonder how the object was made. My objective is to integrate new processes into traditional techniques to create original ceramic art. The sponge cloth has become my tool and my source of inspiration. It is both stimulating and challenging to adapt the form and purpose of the flat sponge to create ceramics as though they were textiles.

The process: The first step is to sew the flat sponges together to make the patchwork molds (1). Sometimes, I think that my work is more of a sewing project than a ceramic project because I spend quite a lot of time in front the sewing machine. You have to anticipate how the liquid porcelain will react in the mould and how it will be emptied out before actually sewing the pieces together.

I work with gravity and evaporation. The moulds are suspended on a rack so the porcelain can be poured into an opening on the top of the object (2). A



thin porcelain layer is formed as the water evaporates through the walls of the cellulous sponges just like a plaster a mould draws out water. This step can be quite long (1-2 hours) and it depends on the temperature and humidity in the studio. The bottom part of the mold is then slit open to let the excess slip pour out (3).

Once the casted shape is leather hard, I cut the seams open and gently peel away the sponge to reveal the work (4). This part of the process is the most gratifying because it is the 'magic moment' when the sponge cloth is transformed into a porcelain object. The result is definitely 'textile' as all of the textures and seams of the patchwork sponge cloth have been imprinted into the porcelain.

Spongeware, my utilitarian series, is all white. As the technique evolved into toys on wheels and installations I felt the need to add colour to increase the textile aspect of the work. The colour and patterns also allow me to develop playful rhythms and connections among the pieces. The colour is applied very thinly and through multiple firings so I do not lose the delicate texture of the surface under a thick layer of glaze. Transparent glaze is saturated with oxides and industrial colours. I gently rub or paint the colour onto the pieces, bisque fire and repeat the process until I am satisfied with the intensity and quality of the finish. The work is fired in an electric kiln at 1260°C.

For the love of ceramic art, I like to think that there is symbiotic relationship between the clay and the artist, an essential interaction that provides a unique balance in ceramic work. Being passionate about contemporary ceramics is the appreciation of ancient and traditional processes that are constantly evolving through creativity and imagination. As a promoter of ceramics in Switzerland and abroad embracing new processes and modern techniques may be a means to (help) traverse the barrier that continues to separate ceramic craft from contemporary art. Personally, I look forward to spending more time in front of my sewing machine creating ceramics.....

For a more detailed explanation of this process I invite you to watch the video Patchwork Porcelain that can be seen on my internet site www.lynn-ceramique.com



Spongeware



Pyjamas

Lynn Frydman Kuhn was born in Toledo Ohio, USA in 1964. She moved to Switzerland in 1985 where she obtained degrees in Applied Ceramic Art and in Ceramic Design from the professional arts school in Vevey. She has a Post-Graduate Diploma from the CERCCO (Centre of Experimentation and Research in Contemporary Ceramics) from the HEAD (Haute Ecole d'Art et Design) in Geneva.

Residencies in both Korea and China have influenced her artistic expression as well as the diversity of the American and Swiss cultures. She is methodical in her work yet the fruit of experimentation has played a vital role in developing her creative language. She has given demonstrations of the Patchwork Porcelain technique throughout Europe and Asia. Her work has been exhibited in museums and galleries internationally. Lynn is currently co-president of the professional ceramics association, [swissceramics](http://swissceramics.com). Lynn has been a member of the International Academy of Ceramics since 2017. www.lynn-ceramique.com

Photography: Manon Kuhn process images, Lynn Frydman Kuhn finished pieces.