



Rika Herbst Portfolio 2025

Artist Statement

I aim to create unique pieces that inspire contemplation and enjoyment by crafting textures that compel touch and provoke memory, and by playing with light and shadow to enhance the materiality of clay. My carving, texturing, and piercing techniques form a cumulative and intensive process—one that demands time and a deep connection with the medium. By weaving a narrative that highlights the interconnectedness of our existence, I seek to explore diverse cultures and the transformation of tradition over time.

Nature is my primary source of inspiration. Trees, with their entangled branches and roots, serve as powerful metaphors for human and cultural interconnection. They are both oxygen-giving and symbolic, resilient organisms that reflect our ability to adapt and regenerate under changing circumstances.

As life evolves, so does my work. Once created, each piece becomes a path of expression, carrying an essence of life—a quiet but powerful statement of being. While the ethereal qualities of porcelain remain a passion, exploring heavier clay bodies through wood and gas firing, where natural glazing grounds my practice and opens up new possibilities, such as painting with fire.

My artistic practice has increasingly focused on larger-scale sculptural works inspired by organic forms, particularly three-dimensional interpretations of tree structures. These sculptures are distinguished by highly textured surfaces, intricate perforations, and intentional finger marks — marks that speak to the time, patience, and presence of the maker. The sculpting process is slow and labour-intensive, involving precise material handling and atmospheric firing techniques that allow the clay to respond naturally and unpredictably.

The trees I sculpt symbolise interconnectedness and cultural unity. Their intertwining limbs mirror the bonds between diverse communities, making each form not only a physical object but also a vessel for reflection. Through this body of work, I continue to explore themes of resilience, growth, and connection, translating both internal emotion and external structures into textured, living sculpture that invites engagement across time and culture.

Layers of Light: 28 x 25 x 24cm (h)

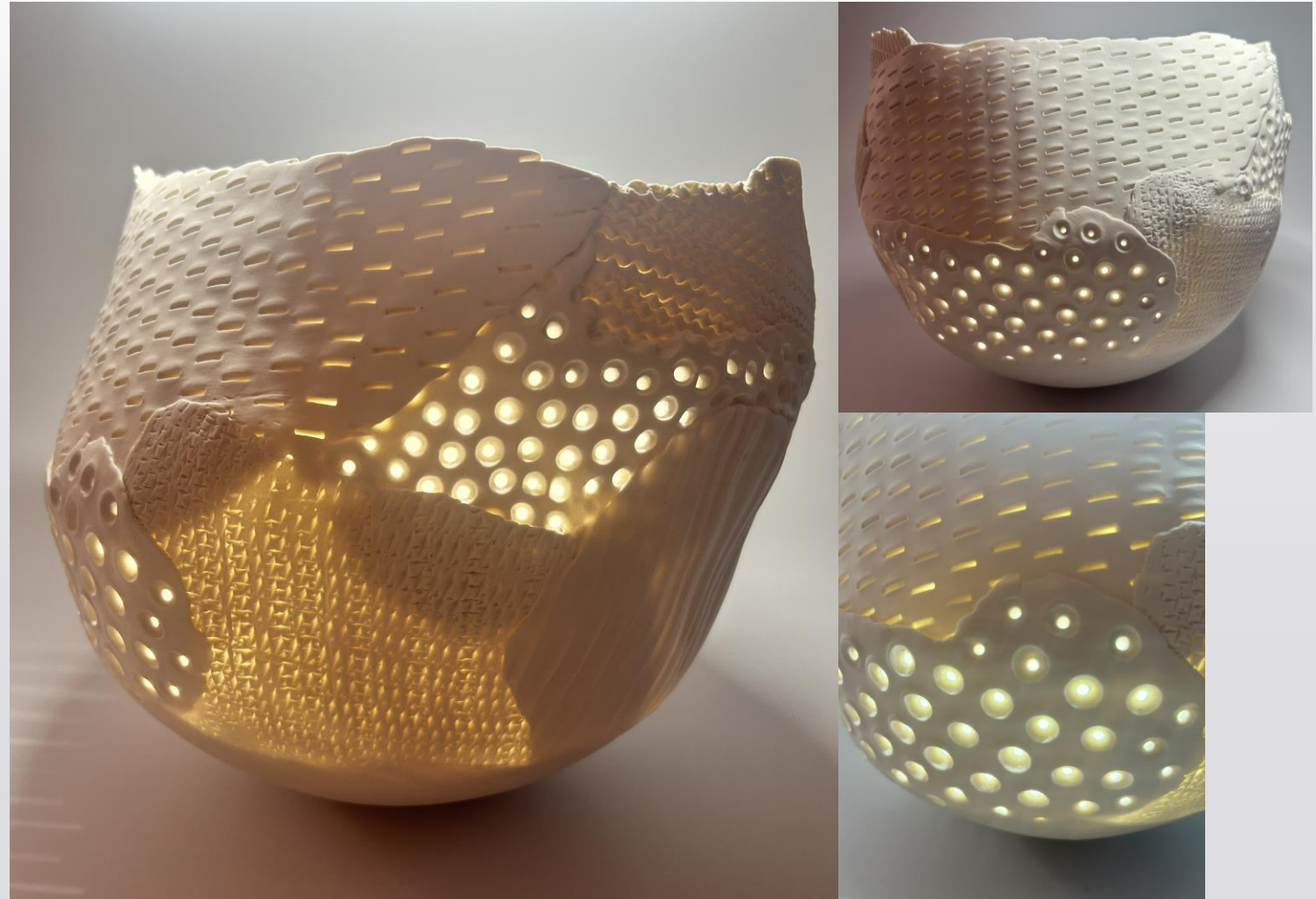
This piece draws inspiration from the esteemed tradition of porcelain being treasured for its delicacy and strength, while being shaped from South African porcelain, a material rooted in my own landscape and history. In this work, South African porcelain joins a lineage of global ceramic heritage, becoming a vessel not only of clay, but of memory, history, and human strength — a shared language of fragility and endurance. The vessel becomes a meditation on how our experiences shape and transform us.

This porcelain vessel is composed of overlapping fragments, each carrying a unique texture and translucency. Together, they evoke the layered nature of human experience: moments of joy, loss, strength, and vulnerability. Just as porcelain reveals its quiet beauty when touched by light, so too do our stories emerge through the layers we carry, visible to those willing to look closely.

The vessel's form speaks to how every experience shapes who we become. The interplay of translucency and texture speaks to the paradox of human existence: how our most fragile parts often reveal our deepest strength. Even when we seem fractured or worn by time, our essence endures — intact, resilient, and able to tell our story.

Through this work, I explore the paradox of fragility and strength, the visible and the hidden, and how our layered histories give depth and meaning to who we are.

Through this work, local porcelain becomes part of a global ceramic heritage — a vessel of light and memory that honours both tradition and personal narrative, reminding us that what makes us vulnerable also makes us beautifully human. **JUNE 2025**





- **Epoch of Form: Stoneware 30cm x 30cm x 28 cm**

The ovoid shape serves as a metaphor for life's cyclical nature, inviting contemplation on how forces both seen and unseen influence our journey. The textured surface, crafted by hand, creates a rich tactile experience, drawing the viewer closer to engage. It represents the multitude of experiences and emotions that coexist within us. The viewer is invited to explore the intricate interplay of light and shadow on its surface, which alters with the movement of the observer. The folds imply a sense of depth and evoke feelings of vulnerability and strength, embodying the synchrony of opposing forces. Epoch of Form encapsulates the essence of hidden synchrony — a celebration of harmonies found within contradictions. It reflects the quiet resilience of the human spirit, encouraging viewers to contemplate their relationship with the abstract dimensions of their own lives. The artist conveys how beauty often emerges from complexity.

- **Jan 2025** – on exhibition at the Jan Rupert Art Centre,

Graaf-Reinet



Ubuntu: 40cm× 40cm× 55cm (h)

This large-scale tree sculpture is a visionary exploration of interconnectedness, rootedness, and collective growth. Constructed from terracotta clay, it embodies the enduring strength and timeless connection between humankind and the earth. The sculpture's form is composed of intertwining coils shaped into a majestic canopy of branches, symbolising the myriad relationships that bind individuals, communities, and nations—each coil a thread in the rich tapestry of cultural identity and shared dreams.

The coils, meticulously layered to form the canopy, evoke the complexities and nuances of cultural narratives, weaving together traditions, histories, and aspirations. Their entwined nature signifies unity through diversity—a testament to our collective resilience and the symbiotic bonds that sustain us. The sculpture, though rooted firmly in its material, reaches upwards into the sky, embodying the universal human desire for growth, transcendence, and connection beyond borders.

Made of terracotta, a clay that speaks of earth and heritage, the piece is glazed with layered oxides and glazes, creating a rich, variegated surface that shimmers with subtle hues of warm terracotta, deep greens, and hints of metallic sheen. Fired at 1260 degrees Celsius, the sculpture's surface reflects the transformative process of fire—symbolic of the alchemy involved in cultural evolution and identity shaping over generations. The textured surface invites viewers to explore the tactile richness and the layered histories embedded within the material, emphasising the importance of tradition fused with innovation.

Personifying the interconnectedness of humankind, the sculpture visualises our rooted origins—each coil anchored in Mother Earth—while simultaneously reaching skyward, inspired by hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Despite our grounding, we are all part of a vast, living network, growing together in harmony and shared purpose. The intertwining branches serve as a metaphor for the fluid, dynamic nature of cultural exchange—an ongoing dialogue between the past and present, tradition and innovation, stability and aspiration.

"Ubuntu" is a powerful and recognisable term in South African culture that embodies compassion, community, and mutual care. This emphasises collective growth and a sense of rootedness and aligns with the sculpture's visual language of entwined coils and reaching branches, symbolising unity and shared effort.

Ubuntu, as the title of the piece, reinforces the message that our individual existence and growth are interconnected, both culturally and globally. It emphasises that the sculpture is not only an aesthetic object but also a poetic declaration of collective identity rooted in community and cultural heritage.

- June 2025



Interwoven Roots of Life: 20 x 20 x 42 cm (H)

This piece symbolises the profound interconnectedness between nature and humanity. The coiled, interwoven branches represent the complex and dynamic relationships that bind all living beings, emphasising resilience, growth, and the continuum of life. The terracotta core bonded with a delicate porcelain slip in a soft illuminant green evokes a sense of harmony, renewal, and hope—highlighting our interconnected existence within the natural world. The tree's form mirrors the intricate web of human relationships and ecosystems, reminding us of our shared roots and mutual dependence. It invites viewers to reflect on the importance of nurturing both personal and collective growth, understanding that our well-being is intertwined with that of the environment and each other. This sculpture celebrates the beauty of unity and the organic strength found in interconnected life.

- June 2025



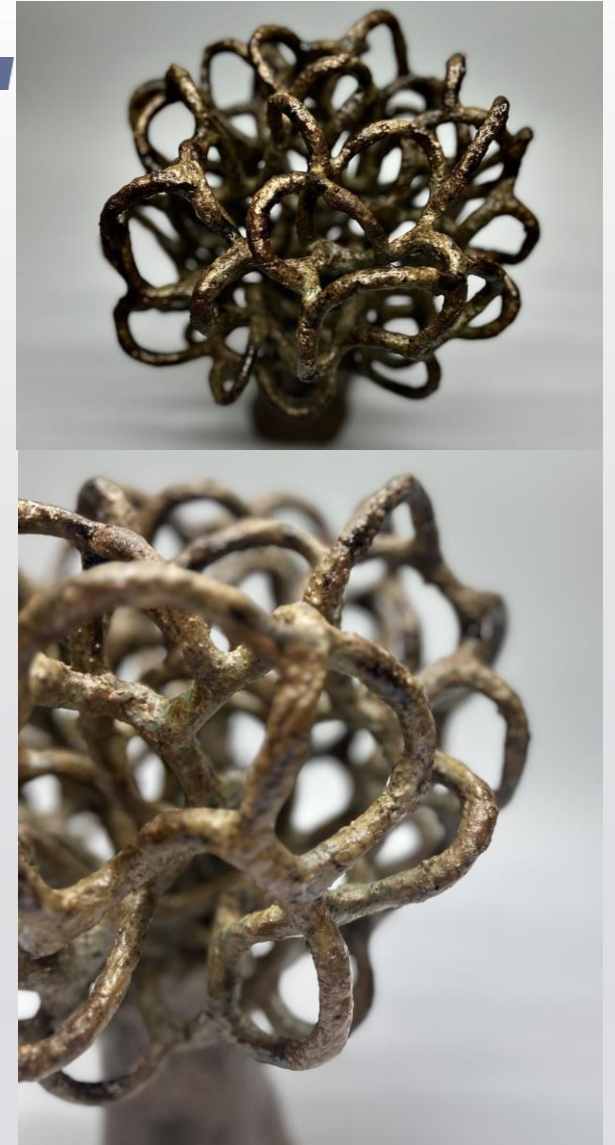
BRANCHES OF BELONGING: 29 x 29 x 25cm (H)

This three-dimensional terracotta tree explores the entangled nature of nations and cultures through the language of clay. The solid, rooted base represents grounding — a connection to origin, land, and identity. Rising from this foundation, the trunk transitions into a network of hand-coiled forms, opening into negative spaces that allow the viewer to see through the work. These layered coils evoke the complexity of cultural relationships: interconnected, overlapping, and continually evolving.

A glassy glaze envelops the top of the tree, introducing contrast and luminosity. The glaze signifies transformation — a metaphor for the fluid, often fragile exchanges that occur when traditions meet, merge, or coexist. The transparent spaces within the coiling reflect both openness and interdependence, suggesting that no culture exists in isolation.

This piece is both a personal reflection and a global commentary, inviting viewers to consider how history, movement, and dialogue shape our collective roots and branches.

- **June 2025**



BRANCHES OF BELONGING: 22 x 23 x 26cm (H)

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The Gathering

Set of 3 porcelain bowls created with Jingdezhen Porcelain. Carved, textured and pierced, fired 1260° in electric kiln.

Bowls ± 35 cm diam x 22/24 & 35 cm (h)

April 2024 - Quomo Art Gallery
Jingdezhen, China



Deep Forest (3)_± 35 cm diam x 35 cm (h)

Tall Porcelain Vase. Carved, textured and pierced, fired 1260° in electric kiln.

Oct 2023 – Shanghai Institute of Visual Art, China



Whisperings Trees

Purple Teapot Clay Bowl and Vase,
Porcelain leaves. Carved, textured and
pierced, woodfired in China 1260°. Bowl
36cm diam x 10cm, Bottle 65 cm x 28cm
diam, leaves set 30 x 30cm.

Oct 2023 -5th Shanghai – Yunnan Jianshui
International Woodfired Ceramics
Festival. Purple Pottery Museum Jianshui



Winter is coming

Set of 5 leaves, stained
porcelain, carved, textured and
pierced, fired 1260°. Set size 900 x
900 mm.

Oct 2017 - 3rd Cluj Ceramics
Biennale (2017) Cluj-Napoca
Romania



Cherry blossoms

Bone china, glazed inside,
polished outside, fired 1260°.
15cm diam x 11cm height.

Oct 2017 - XIII International
Biennial of Artistic Ceramics of
Aveiro, Portugal



Sycamore Forest

Paper porcelain – carved,
textured and pierced, fired
1220° C, unglazed. 25cm diam
x 12cm height.

Oct 2017 - 3rd Cluj Ceramics
Biennale (2017) Cluj-Napoca
Romania



Enchanted Forest

Paper porcelain, stained,
carved, textured and pierced,
fired 1220° C, unglazed with
guilders paste finish.

32cm x 12cm x 2cm height

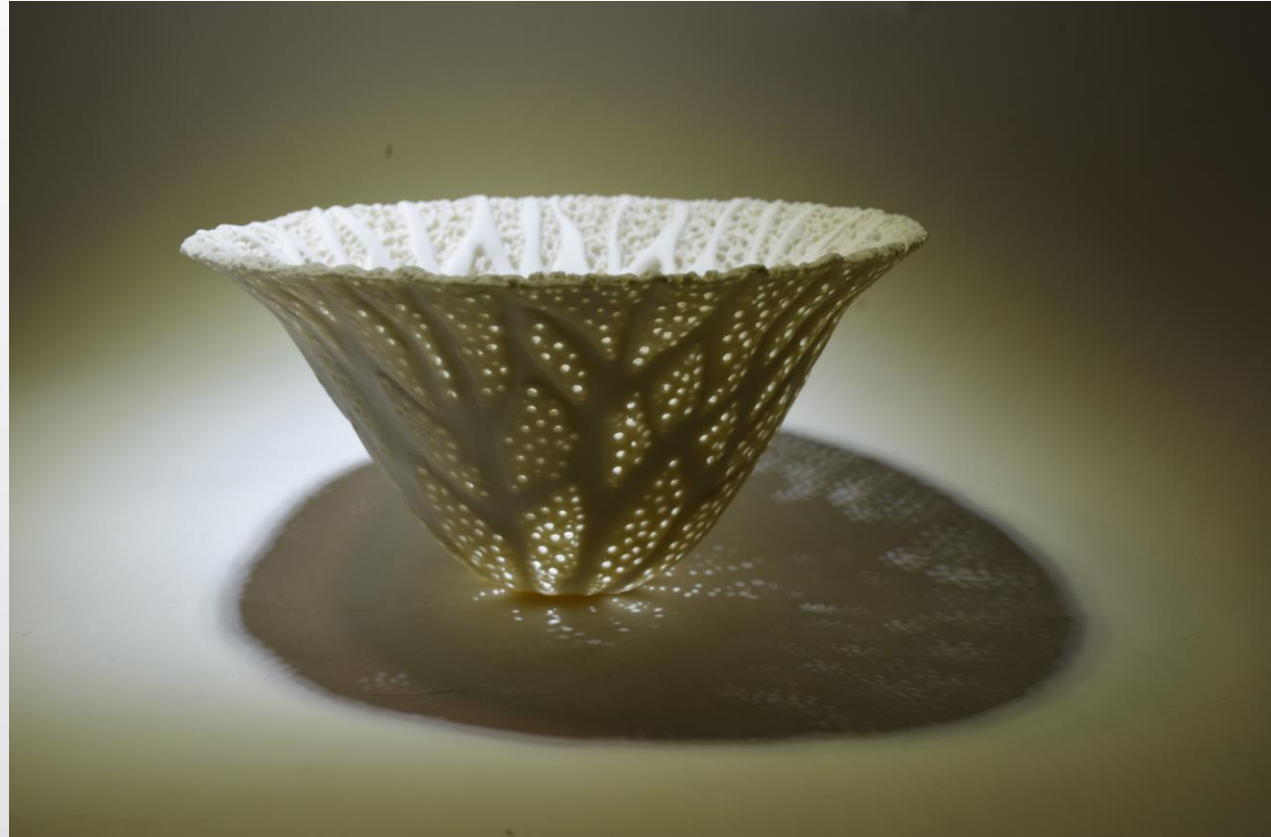
Oct 2017 - 3rd Cluj Ceramics
Biennale (2017) Cluj-Napoca
Romania



Deep Forest (2)

Paper porcelain – carved,
textured and pierced, fired
1220° C, unglazed. 22cm diam
x 12cm height.

Aug 2016 – Ceramica Multiplex
2016 Croatia



Poplar Forest

Paper porcelain – carved, textured and pierced, fired 1220° C, unglazed. 30cm diam x 22cm height.

July 2016, Changchun China

Collection: 5th Changchun International Ceramics Symposium, China 2016



Meltdown gold rim

Porcelain cast with gold lustre on rim fired 1220° C, glazed inside. 16,5cm diam x 7cm height.

Nov 2015 - XII Bienal de Cerâmica Artística de Aveiro, Portugal





Tree of Life

Paper porcelain – carved,
textured and pierced, fired
1220° C, unglazed 34cm diam
x 8cm height.

Nov 2015 - XII Bienal de
Cerâmica Artística de Aveiro,
Portugal



Odyssey 2

Porcelain, slip cast, carved. Fired
1220° C, unglazed and polished.
11,5cm diam x 6cm height.

May 2015 - III Triennial of
Ceramics UNICUM 2015 Slovenia

Collection: National Museum of
Slovenia, 2015

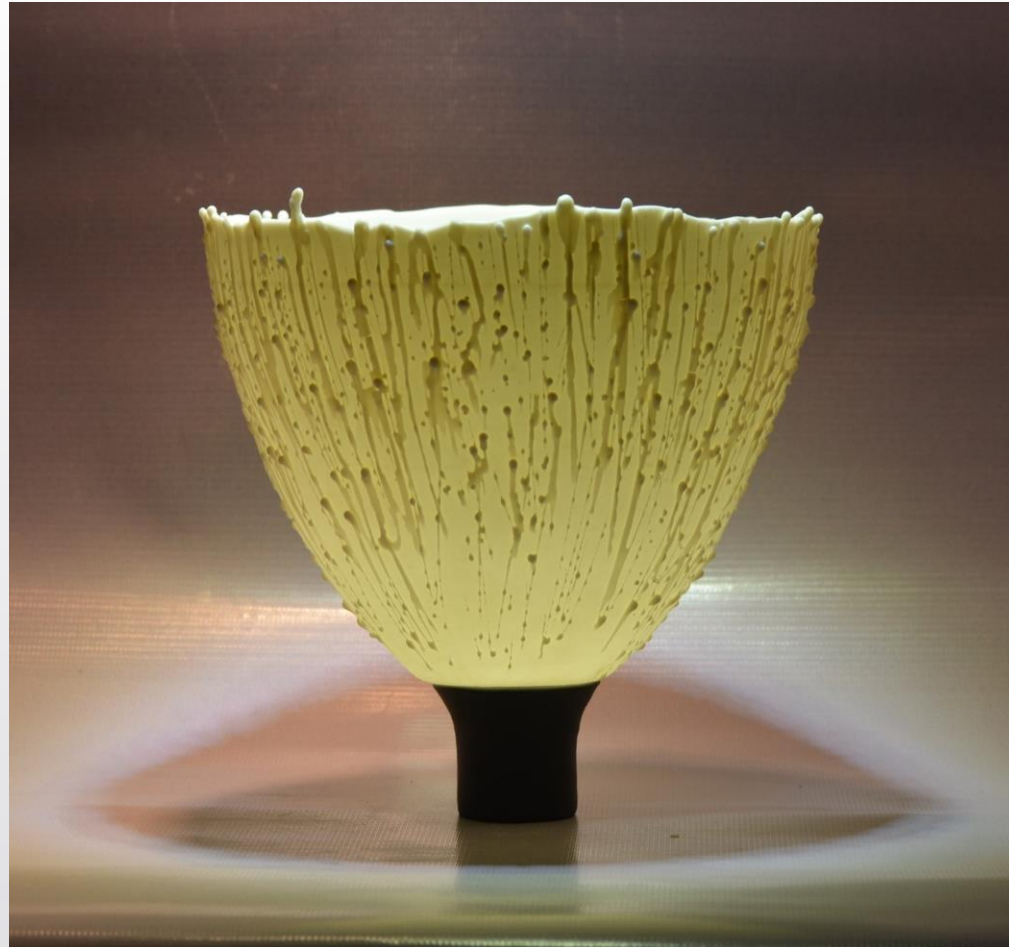


Meltdown 2

Porcelain, slip cast, added texture.
Fired 1220° C, unglazed and
polished on Pate de Vere foot.
20cm diam x 25cm height.

July 2013 - Cluj International
Ceramics Biennale 2013 Romania

Collection: Cluj International
Ceramics Biennale, Romania 2013

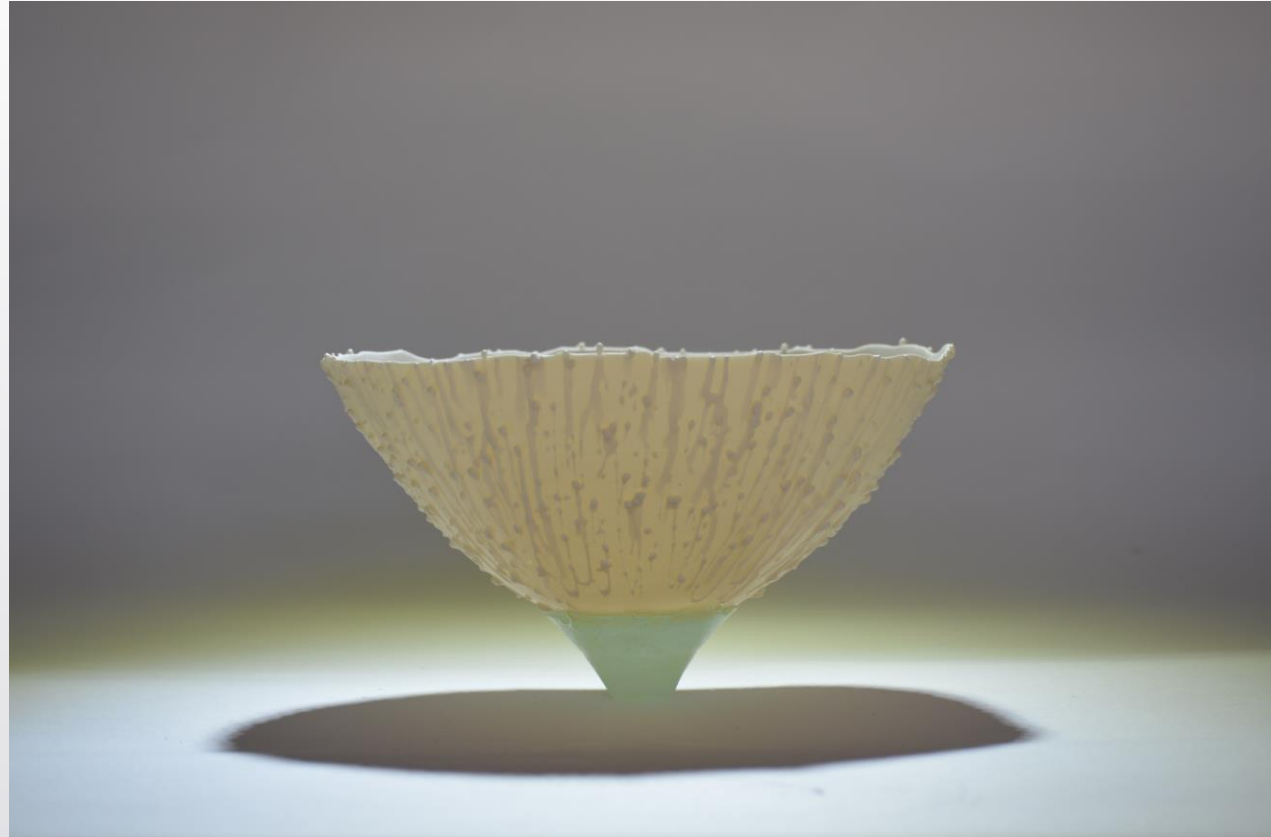


Meltdown

Porcelain, slip cast, added texture. Fired 1220° C, unglazed and polished on Pate de Vere foot. 22cm diam x 12cm height

July 2013 – 11^a Biennial
International Artistic Ceramics
Exhibition Aveiro, Portugal 2013

Collection: Ceramics Museum,
Aveiro Portugal 2013

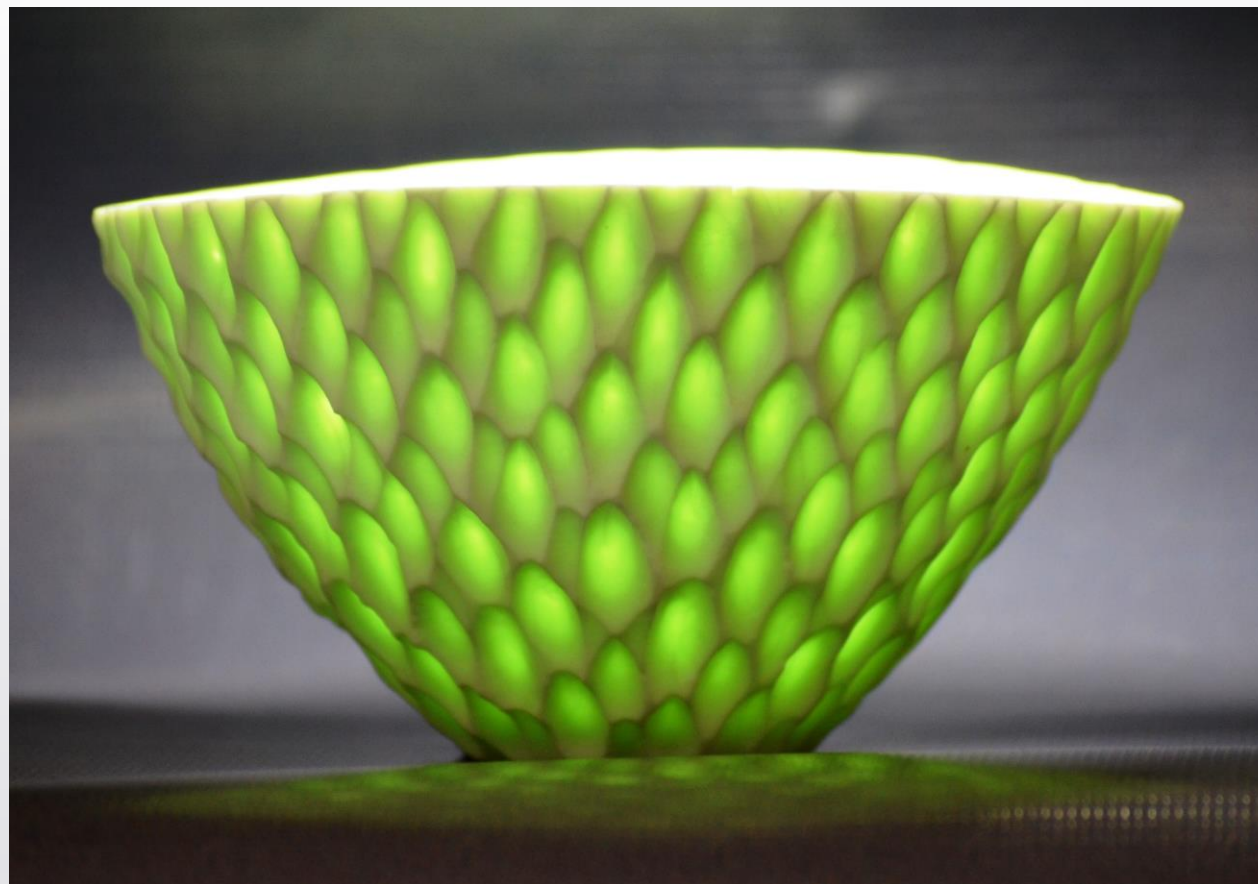


Green Odyssey

Stained porcelain, double cast, carved. Fired 1220° C, unglazed and polished. 15cm diam x 12cm height.

Aug 2012 – Ceramica Multiplex
Croatia - Honourable Mention

Collection: KERAMEIKON
Collection of Contemporary
World Ceramics, Croatia 2012



Dark Forest

Stained Paper porcelain –
carved, textured and pierced,
fired 1220° C, unglazed and
polished. 32cm diam x 10cm
height.

Aug 2012 – The Iconic
Handmade Piece South Africa –
Decorex Gauteng South Africa

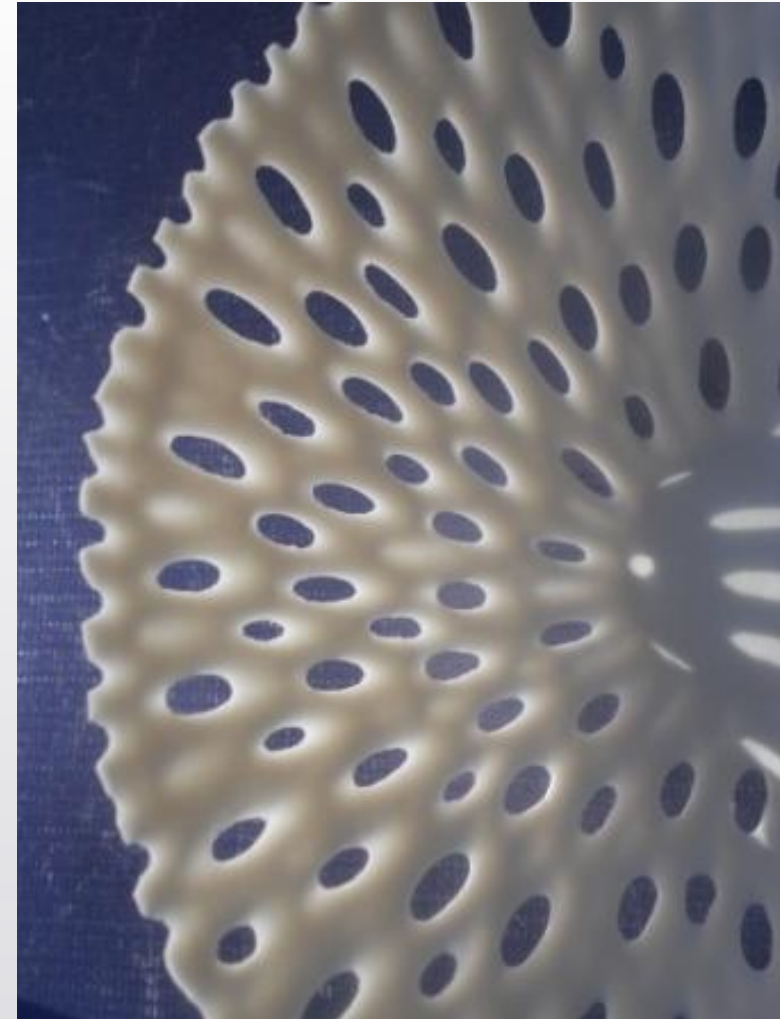


Southern Ice

Southern Ice porcelain bowl, carved.
High fired 1250°C, unglazed and
polished.

Aug 2011 – CSA Regional Exhibition -
Highly Commended Award South
Africa

Collection: Corobrick Collection
Pretoria 2011



Deep forest

Paper porcelain – slab, carved, textured and pierced, oxidation fired 1220° C, unglazed. 22cm diam x 12cm height.

Jun 2011 - Gyeonggi International
CeraMIX Biennale 2011, Korea –
Certificate of Honor

Collection: Korea Ceramic foundation
2011



Sickel Bush

Paper porcelain – carved,
textured and pierced. High
fired 1220° C, unglazed. 23cm
diam x 8cm height

Apr 2011 - 9th International
Ceramics competition Mino,
Japan - Honorable Mention

