

Interview

LUISA MAISEL

EST. 1990, NICE, FRANCE

As an American-born ceramic artist who has lived and worked in France for the past 40 years, Luisa Maisel infuses her sculptures with an intriguing blend of contemporary, cultural, and historical references. Each handmade work celebrates the artistry of craft with an emphasis on traditional, time-honored techniques.

Please tell us about a core textile memory.

My textile love is patchwork quilts and braided rugs from Vermont. They shape stories, are nurturing, sometimes narrative, and beautifully handmade through master craftsmanship.

Tell us about your career journey.

I fell in love with ceramics at 24 in Paris, France, and it's intrigued me ever since.

What are you spending your time on?

I exhibited my porcelain "Colorful Confinement Vases" at Maison & Objet for the first time in September 2022. It was quite a success! So, recently I have been making the vases. Before that I have been sculpting in clay for 35 years, exhibiting in galleries, participating in art residencies, teaching in major art institutes and researching.

Tell us about your design and development process.

I work alone. For my sculptural work my themes change



Luisa Maisel



Luisa Maisel's Colorful Confinement vase series



Work in progress from Luisa's 2018 residency in Japan



Luisa Maisel's Colorful Confinement vase series at Maison et Objet

constantly. Over these past 35 years, I've dedicated my work to three series: "Face-to-Face" or portraits; "Stacking & Piling" (accumulations); and "Ceramic-ing" (pottery ware). The sculptures in Face-to-Face are portraits that reflect upon the intimate relationship between subject and model. I'm particularly motivated by the process inherent in portraiture, which induces both self-reflection and a form of combat between myself and the clay.

The sculptures in Stacking & Piling question the traces and concerns which emanate from political turmoil, social injustice, and natural catastrophes. These sculptures are built like spontaneous memorials, amalgams of ordinary objects, often symbolic, which have an immediate relationship to a particular catastrophe or loss. Here I question the transmutation of these objects, the memories and traces they leave behind or the symbolic value that we transfer onto them. I use the process of free association, to build, assemble, accumulate, and stack and pile.

Ceramic-ing regroups my research in clay and expression through pottery: platters, discs, dishes, and vases. I research the multitude of possibilities in clay while experimenting with shape, color, and technique to express beauty and emotion through the simplest of forms.

As far as the material is concerned, I'm fascinated by the complexity of clay—its transformation from liquid to solid, dirty to clean, rough to glossy, soft to hard, mud to sublime.

Is there anything about your creative process that would surprise people?

What surprises me is the passion that never subsides—that drive to create and make. Actually, I'm more