

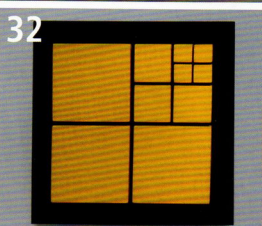
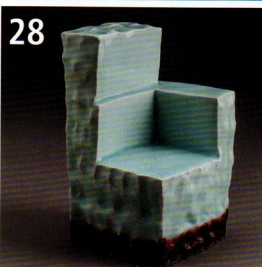
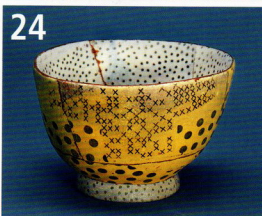
# NEW CERAMICS

The European Ceramics Magazine



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# VICTOR RESHETNIKOV

BY MARTA YARALOVA

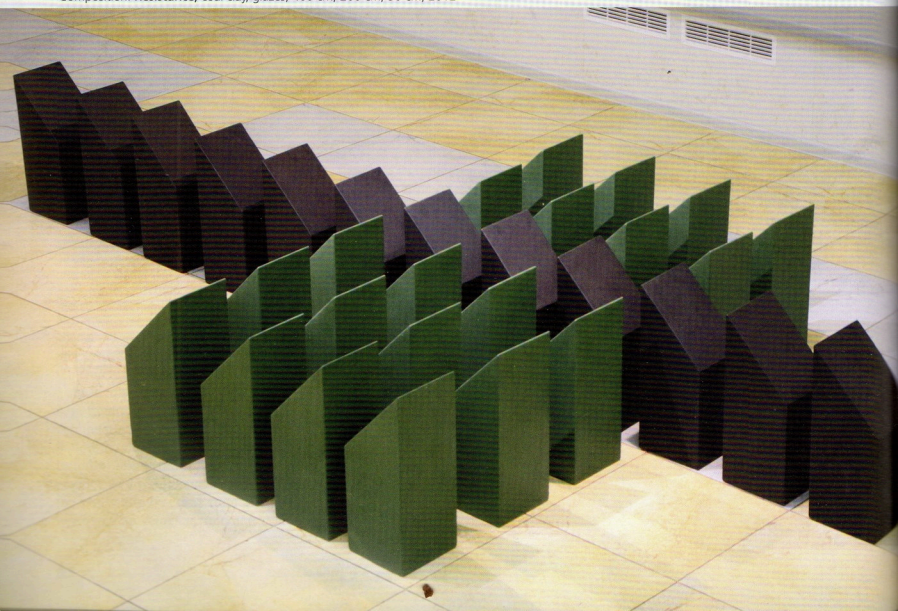
Victor Reshetnikov began his studies at the Leningrad Higher School of Art and Industry named after V.I. Mukhina (today: The Saint Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design), and completed them at the State Art Institute of the Estonian SSR (today: The Estonian Academy of Arts) in the Department of Ceramics and Glass, where he transferred in the search for new forms of interpretation of ceramics and other ways of working with the material. For the 1970s the student's decision not to continue his education in one of the central professional educational institutions and transfer to the institute of another republic, consciously change adjusted education in Saint-Petersburg to the dynamic art world of then Tallinn, was a truly remarkable act that spoke for the sincerity and honesty of a young artist, who through his education was striving to obtain not a status marker but an actual experience of creative process and an understanding of individual artistic practices. In the decades that followed, the artist preserved his creative honesty and a conscious need for renewal and to extend his own artistic language.

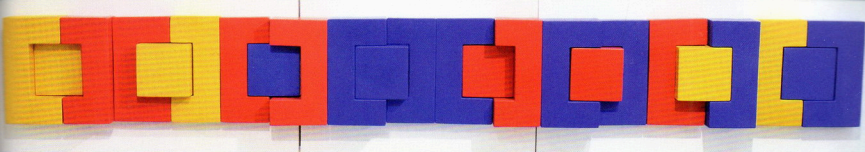
Back at school in Saint-Petersburg, Reshetnikov began his experiments in form-making that were based on the modular approach. He was interested in the feasibility of creating a formal composition, which even then was viewed by the artist as the most likely source to show the potential of the material. In Tallinn, inspired

by his teachers – renowned Estonian artists Leo Rohlin and Helena Kuma – Victor Reshetnikov continued his research in the field of combinatorics. Since the 1970s, the plastic capabilities of ceramics as a creative medium have served as the base of the artists' practice. In his works Reshetnikov always puts emphasis on the superiority of form over decorative properties, adherence to the sculptural content over visual abuse towards the material.

Working mainly with simple geometric shapes, such as a circle, a square, a triangle and their three-dimensional forms, Victor Reshetnikov consistently unveils ceramics' multiplication potential and breaks new ground by creating large volumetric and spatial works of art through multiple repetition of a single basic element. It seems that constant reproduction of the same overly

Composition: **Resistance**, coal clay, glazes, 400 cm, 200 cm, 50 cm, 2012





Composition: **Resistance**, coal-clay, glazes, 400 cm, 200 cm, 50 cm, 2012

simplified form is somewhat of an artificial constraint that affords neither the artist nor the material an opportunity for extreme variability. However, the idea of seriation as opposed to a one-of-a-kind art object allows Reshetnikov to accentuate such ceramic trends as actual and decorative art that are often pushed into the background of the Russian artistic environment ("Resistance"). Reshetnikov's works make it possible to view ceramics not only as exclusively visual, decorative media, but also as a material that shapes and defines space of not just its own three-dimensional form, but the environment as well. Objects not only have the ability to "finish building" and self-replicate, but also to fill up any space allocated to them, demonstrating infinity of the form and the ability to contain it at the same time, while preserving a certain number of elements ("Dedication to Benoit Mandelbrot"). Fractal structures emphasize the idea of continuous repeatability inherent in the nature of ceramics. Clay, as the oldest and closest of the materials that accompany men, allows for quick replacement of an old clay object with a new one; enhancement of an already existing composition, without warranting considerable costs for preparing the material and working with it.

Moreover, products made of clay retain their natural properties and origin. Works done by Victor Reshetnikov reflect that the colour composition complements and adds to the perception of the works' structure. The colour highlights both the works' structure and a certain versatility that persists even in repetitive forms made by man from natural materials ("Rhythms"). It should be noted that, when working with colour, the artist also involuntarily touches upon the question of juxtaposing man-made objects as a continuation of all things natural and technical. In his works, Reshetnikov uses his own glazes. It is on the one hand a purely technical solution, but on the other hand, it is a chance to introduce maximum variability and instability to his work, going beyond the pre-planned colours.

Such approaches to handling the material indicate that despite working with geometrical forms the artist still leans towards natural principles embedded in ceramic objects. If geometrical shaping can be called the first focus area

Composition: **Incoming**, clay, glaze  
210 cm, 90 cm, 45 cm, 2015





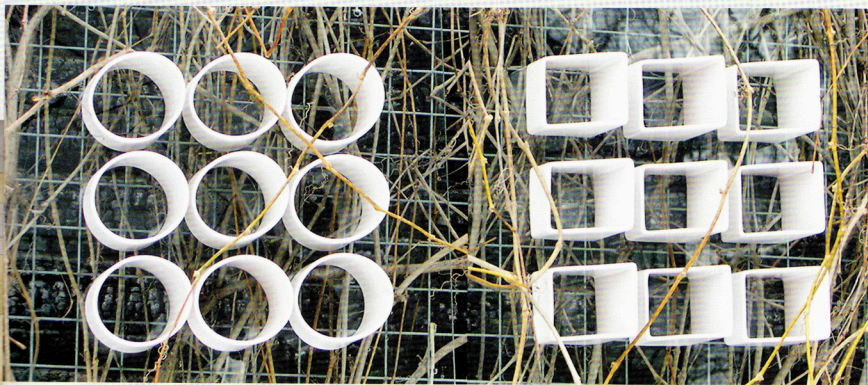
of Victor Reshetnikov's creative activity, then the second one is definitely the bionic, expressed among other things through his understanding of the natural potential of the material. Continuing his search for a renewed plastic language, the artist arrived at the creation of structural, self-reproducing compositions made of objects that duplicated natural forms ("Incoming"). Apart from that, preference for a structural and plastic solution over trivial representation of all things natural with artistic devices is instrumental in ensuring the self-sufficiency of Reshetnikov's works, namely as contemporary art objects rather than decorative elements, created as part of a long-living tradition. It is important for an artist to not only capture "the grass" using conventional material, but to employ and redesign the natural form that relates to his system of creation and artistic objects' functioning and which can expand and enhance said system by means of variability as opposed to geometric correctness.

Another way of internalizing natural experience was the plastic component transformation. Victor Reshetnikov has developed a technique that uses fabric. By submerging the cloth into a slurry with various additives, the artist then moulds it, replicating the textile's three-dimensionality. During firing the fabric burns out, so that only the ceramic form remains. Its design possesses innate naturalness, liveliness and uniqueness that present the

and wood, is dictated by their plastic and formal qualities that facilitate construction of new contexts for ceramics and stress out its plastic features ("Dialogue"). Synthesis turns into another embodiment of a bionic trend, just like an image of natural co-existence of various objects, substances and forms in one space.

Synthesis as a constituent of the author's style is also manifested in reinterpretation of the cultural experience of the past. Having an extensive background in ceramics and appreciating it keenly, Victor Reshetnikov creates pieces that demonstrate the artist's understanding of complex practices of modernism within the framework of a specific material. The perception of constructions and studies of the Russian avant-garde is responsible for the geometric foundations of Reshetnikov's works; one of the most symbolic images for the artist is a grille, being one of the central objects of Western European and Russian modernism. Furthermore, the artist's work also pays tribute to other practices. For instance, when it comes to working with the material and shaping, Japanese raku ceramics with its genuineness and accentuated man-made origin is both relatable and intriguing to Victor Reshetnikov.

To sum up, in the course of his work the artist has accumulated not only a constantly re-evaluated and ever-growing personal practical experience, but also knowledge concerning the



Composition: *Dialogue*, ceramic, glass, glaze, 50 cm, 110 cm, 13 cm, 2003

artist with a new approach to working with the material. This practice is based on the artist's experience with tapestries. In his youth, Reshetnikov created objects by incorporating wires into the tapestries, which then allowed him to add volume to a two-dimensional piece by bending the wires that would consequently become the body of the form. When working with ceramics and fabric, the opposite occurs, as the spatial object loses its internal foundation, turning into evidence of its prior existence.

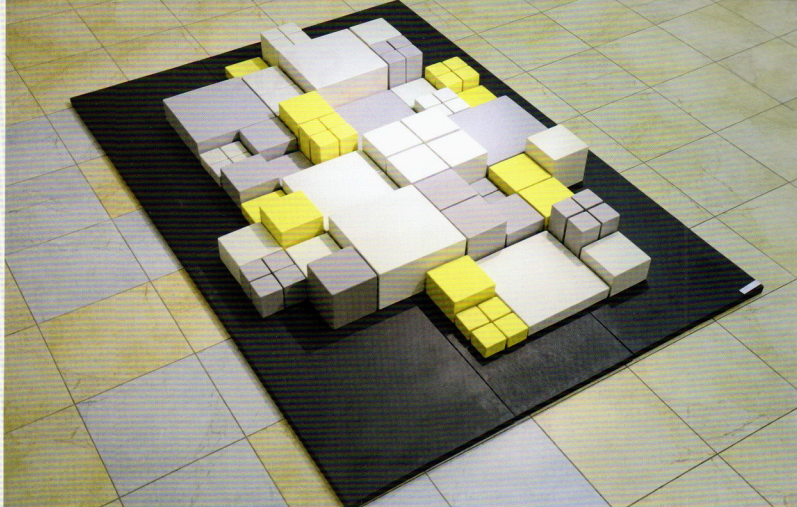
Throughout his career Victor Reshetnikov has aspired to synthesize, be it technical capabilities, various forms or materials. Inclusion of other materials into his work, such as glass, metal

development of approaches to working with the material, the contexts of its existence and various ways of its interpretation. Victor Reshetnikov's ceramics stand out thanks to their stylistic integrity, which has not turned into a disseminated cliché over the years, but instead has remained a true author's statement, his personal interpretation of the chosen material and its distinctive features.

**MARTA YARALOVA**

*in an art historian, curator and member of the Association of Art Historians Russia.*





Composition: **Dedication to Benoit Mandelbrot**, coal-clay, glazes, 270 cm, 210 cm, 20 cm, 1973 – 2012

#### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I have been working with ceramics for more than forty years, most notably with the form, rearranging the objects made out of simple geometric shapes: a circle, a square, a triangle. I am interested in the interaction of these forms, both on a plane and in space; their interplay. For me, it is important to work with sculptural, volumetric materials and not just the graphic component. I am interested in the colour of the form and not in the image on the ceramic surface. I work with compositions, creating multiple rather than single objects; I am curious about the possibilities that are opened by seriation and repeatability of specific elements. The idea of a fractal structure, which I consider to be absolutely fascinating, is reproduced in many of my multipart compositions. At the same time I believe that natural structures and forms – plants, birds, fish, bugs, butterflies and other living organisms – are of great importance. Natural elements guide us when it comes to choosing structure, composition, texture and colour of the future piece. Observing the world through a microscope can reveal astonishing imaginative and sculptural capabilities. In addition to geometry and nature, I view interpretation of the accumulated artistic experience of the past and the present as an essential base of my work. I like that I can work with ceramics in the most diverse spheres; I find it intriguing to redesign the potential that the material has amassed in the field of both decorative and visual arts. Aside from exclusively creative application, it is important for me to understand ceramics as a material that makes it possible to create functional things that can perform not only in the interior, but in the exterior as well.

#### TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Various types of clay (coal-clay, faience, low-fire clay, clinker, porcelain body) are used during work, including the coloured ones. Forms are made by using coloured slurry and paperclay. Work pieces also include other materials: metal, glass, wood.

**VICTOR RESHETNIKOV** born in Vladikavkaz in 1951. Attended the Leningrad Higher School of Art and Industry named after V.I. Mukhina (The Saint Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design); graduated from the Tallinn State Institute of Applied Arts of the Estonian SSR (The Estonian Academy of Arts, 1979). Has been a member of the Moscow Union of Artists (MUA) since 1983, as well as a member of the Union of Designers. He is a ceramist, a sculptor and an object and installation creator.

Works are featured in the museum collections: All-Russian Decorative – Applied and Folk Art Museum (Moscow), World Ceramics Center (South Korea). He has been awarded with: Diplomas of the first and second International Ceramics Biennales, Seoul, South Korea (2001, 2003); First award of the "Landscape and Design" exhibition, Moscow (2008); The Union of Designers Awards For High Design, Moscow (2006, 2008); Moscow Union of Artists Diploma for the decorative composition Aloe, Moscow Decorative Art exhibition (2008).

Participates on a regular basis in Russian and international art, architectural and design exhibitions. Works in the field of interior and exterior as applied to residential and public buildings. Has made a garden art sculpture, using modular combinatoric principle, vases, objects, installation, decorative elements, monumental panel, tapestry and textiles.

Participant of international exhibitions: Form between Tradition and Innovation (International Museum of Ceramics in Faenza, 2003), International Ceramics Biennale (Seoul, 2001 and 2003).

Solo exhibition: VKHUTEMAS Gallery, Moscow Architectural Institute (2015), Belyaev Gallery (Moscow, 2014), All-Russian Museum of Decorative and Applied Art (Moscow, 2004), Moscow Architectural Institute (2004), Mir Art Gallery, Central House of Artist (2003), Central House of Artist (Moscow, 2002).



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