

Willy Van Bussel has made ceramics for more than 30 years. For much of that time he also worked in the clinical department of a hospital and he is an accomplished musician. When you visit his home and studio you are immediately impressed by the order of things. Everything has a place and everything is in its place. It's an Art Deco style town house with linear decoration and block colour, much of it dating back to the time when it was built in the 1930's. It provides a perfect backdrop for Willy's current work. Willy is a perfectionist, his work is precise with clean lines and no clutter. His cylinders and bowls are eggshell thin inviting the passage of light through their delicate structure. Their hard crispness belies their acquired fragility and invites the observer to question, almost disbelieve, the qualities of the material from which they are made; soft smooth pure porcelain carefully hand crafted on the potters wheel, passed through the fingers of the maker and rendered permanent with the heat of the kiln. These translucent objects capture and hold a beautiful luminescence that appears to be emanating from the very porcelain from which they are crafted. Each piece is decorated with simple lines or blocks of solid colour, arresting the passage of light through selected areas - translucence so hard won is selectively denied. There is a musical interplay between the opaque and the translucent, the colour and the cool white of the porcelain structure. His pots confidently assert themselves with clearly defined form and rhythmical pattern, each one a complete statement, a short stanza. question

So the influences are clear. Willy brings together everything he has known; everything he has enjoyed in his long career in ceramics. He is a clinician, a musician and a craftsman. So much to bring to his art and yet his work remains beautifully simplistic, understated but complete. He references the linear, bold graphical approach of the Art Deco period but with a fresh and selective eye and his ceramics are justifiably well acclaimed winning 5 prizes in The Netherlands and Germany in the past two years. He shows his work throughout Europe and in April 2013 he will return for the second time to the prestigious international exhibition Ceramic Art London after having a hugely successful event there in 2012. He is no stranger to travel and with his colleague Toon Thijs he first travelled to the UK with his pots in the early days of 'Potfest' in Penrith in the North of England. Willy, and Toon Thijs together, showed their work with a slickness and style that did not go unnoticed. They were already seasoned in the art of display and presentation, having had much experience of pottery markets in their own country. Willy's market stand was like a mobile mini gallery, black plinths and black drapes created a very reserved and special look and Willy stood on his stand with a very particular style, bespectacled in designer glasses and plaited pigtail hanging all the way down his back. To the English observer he was very Dutch, a bit of exotic. That was in 1997 and Willy was among the pioneers of the pottery community who started a cultural exchange and camaraderie that would help potters such as myself to travel from the UK to mainland Europe with confidence and ease. Of course potters from the UK have been travelling to pottery markets for many years but this was an inspiration for many others to join the search for new markets in The Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium to mention only a few.

At home he has converted the top floor of his house into a studio. It's not large but it's quite adequate and absolutely organized. The casual visitor to Willy's home would never guess there was a ceramics studio contained within it's walls where all the processes of production are carried out with no apparent impact on the day to day requirements of maintaining a home within the house. The ground floor entrance hall is lined with glass cabinets holding a collection of ceramics that Willy has collated from makers he has met on his travels. This is his gallery of works for sale to the collector who is looking for a piece of work that has been hand selected by a maker with a demanding eye. His home is in the small town of Heeze, not very far from Eindhoven. Willy is very suited to Heeze, it's quite perfect, very tidy and sits quietly in delightful countryside.

Willy's current success is due to the fact that he was prepared to make changes, to take chances. For such a long period of time he had been involved in the production of traditional forms with crystalline glazes; work that in the past had also won him prizes. But an artist has to be challenged;

he has to reassess his reasons for producing work; perhaps it's not quite so enjoyable to go on making the same things, relying on the same solutions, day in day out? Surely the work of a tired disinterested artist becomes tired in itself? If there is a danger of that happening then it's time for a change. Willy has entered a time in his life where he has become more relaxed, more at ease and he has embraced and profited from the benefits change. With this frame of mind he can only continue to build on his success.

Eddie Curtis February 2013