

Similar
but
different

New work in porcelain by BEATRIJS VAN RHEEDEN

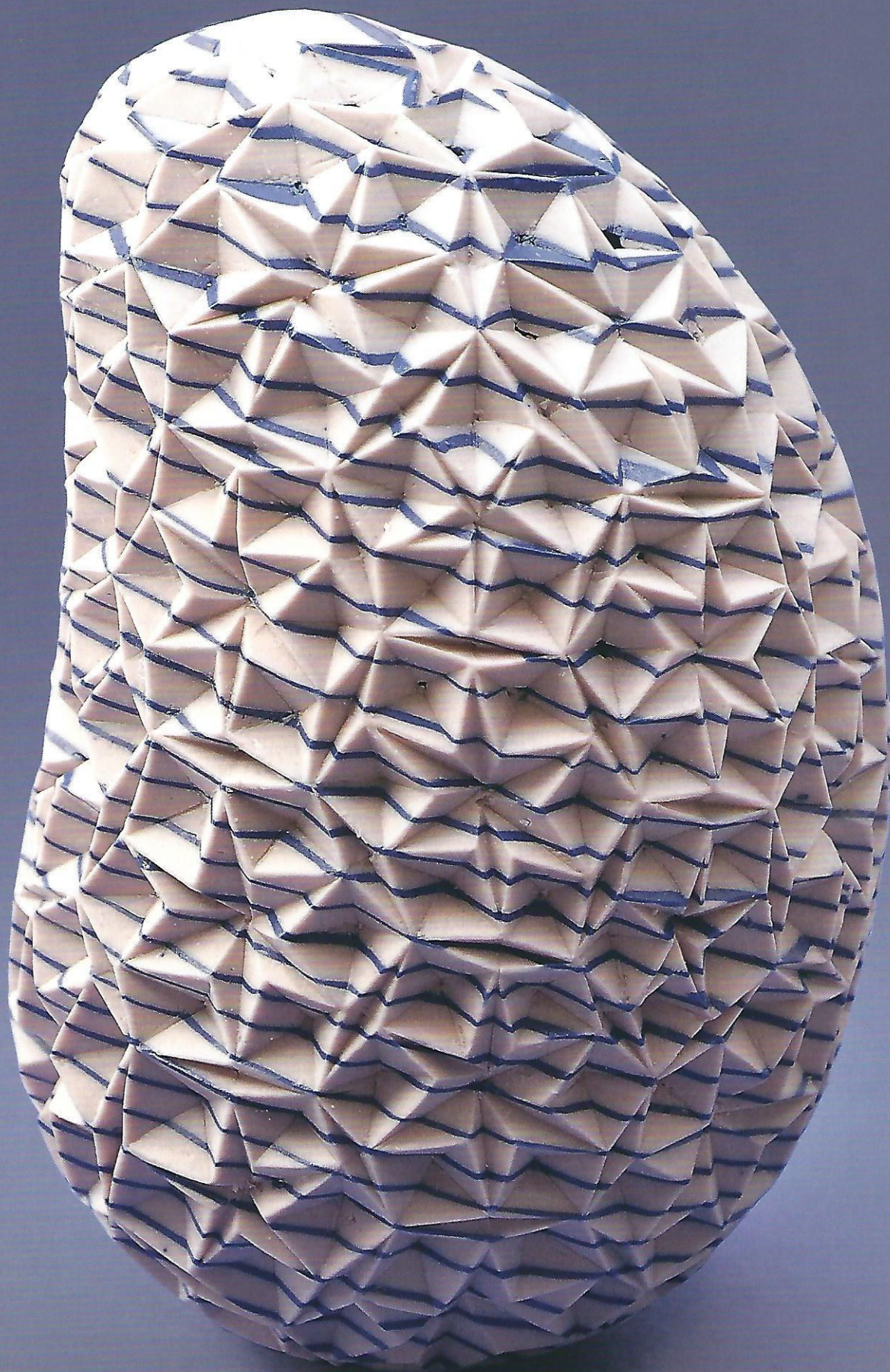
Gudrun Schmidt-Esters

below -
"Mesquita", 2014, 12 x 7 x 11 cm
opposite page
"Pink1", 14 x 9 x 10 cm

For decades, the work of Dutch artist Beatrijs van Rheeden has been defined by a study of recurrent patterns and repeated structures. She first encountered her true medium during a symposium at the ceramics studio in Kecskemet, Hungary, in 1997. Before this, she had made mainly enclosed sculptures in stoneware after studying at the Art Academy in Groningen (1984 – 1989) and the Academy of Applied Art in Budapest (1991 – 1992). she finally made the move to porcelain in 1999. At the same time as her change of material, the focus of her contentual interest, the formal vocabulary and the use of colour changed radically.

But in the more than fifteen years in which she has expressed herself in porcelain, her art has continued to develop. Only recently, the artist has taken a decisive step forward with regard to her construction principles. She is still guided by questions of order, regularity and



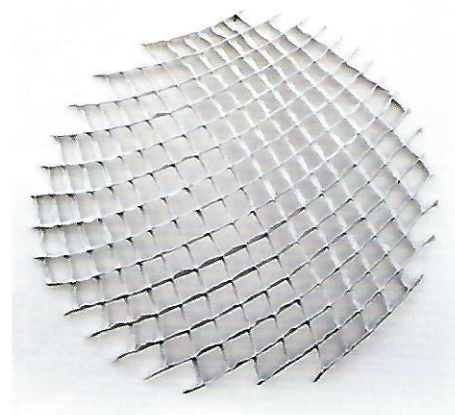




left -
"Ster4", 2014, 10 x 9 x 10 cm

below -
"Texture", 2007, 40 x 40 x 4 cm

opposite page
"Rest", 2014, 28 x 13 x 9 cm



structure, but technically, formally and chromatically, van Rheeden has found a new path in her latest group of work.

If we think of her delicate mural pieces from 2007, the change is obvious. The artist has exchanged segments of round forms in fin-like structures for compact honeycomb skeletons. If the open edges of her older forms suggested infinity, these contrast today with an organic sense of unity. In addition, fragility and translucence have made way for thick walls reminiscent of the vessels of Kap-Sun Hwang. In particular, the layered colour of her honeycomb vessels in porcelain underscores this association. Like him, Beatrijs van Rheeden combines precision with subtle individuality in her work.

Two different groups can be distinguished in her latest work. On the one hand, structured round forms with an attractive interplay of colours develop from two-coloured, layered porcelain with incised honeycomb or star patterns. It is especially these combinations of colour and structure that impress with their unusual aesthetic, but they may also be visually disconcerting. The bottom of each honeycomb cell is not always closed, and sometimes it provides a view of the interior of the form.

The forms in the second group of works are more sophisticated, but with their monochrome white surfaces, they forgo any colour effects. These organic, amoebic forms feature dynamic curves and bulges. The first pieces, which in 2012 denoted the change in her work, were over 50 cm in size; now she works on a smaller scale with her current pieces not exceeding a diameter of 30 cm.

Beatrijs van Rheeden no longer constructs her latest work from thin strips of porcelain that have been pressed flat and joined together like fins, nor does she assemble them from individual, identical modules. This means to say that they no longer grow slowly through the addition of individual elements. Instead, she has chosen a completely different approach. She now forms hollow bodies in porcelain, covering them with a uniform pattern of crystalline shapes such as the honeycomb. She then excises net-like structures from the surface.

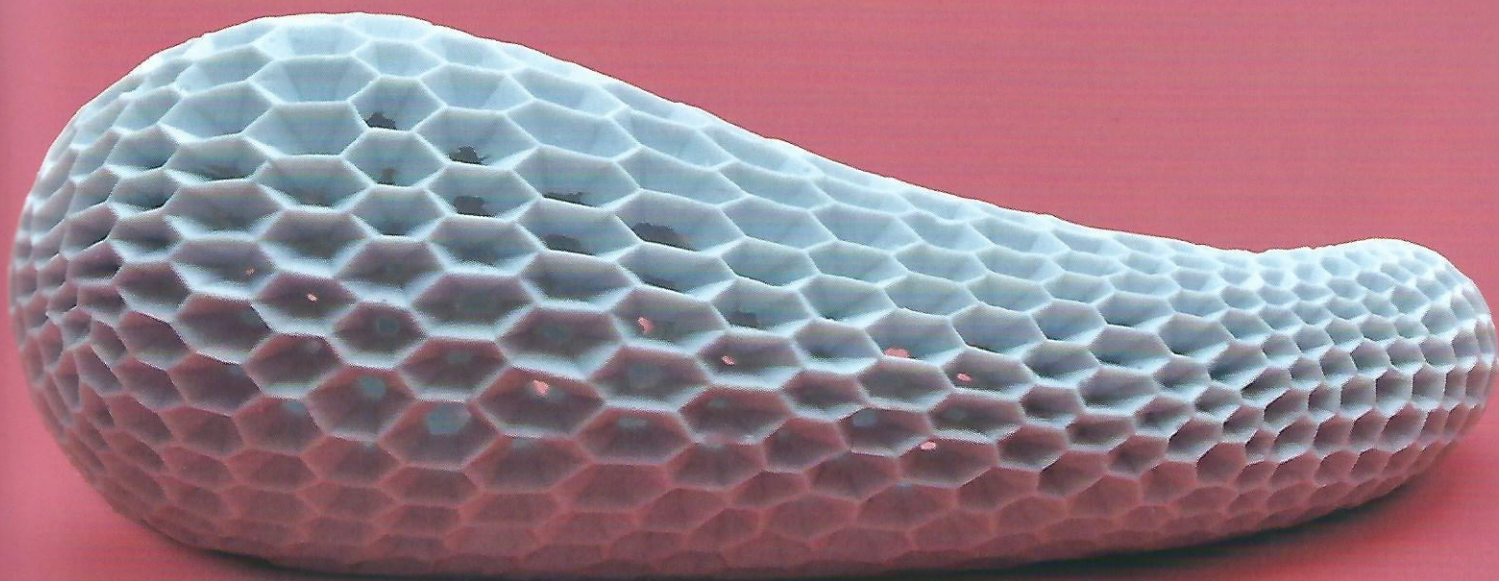
The process of carving or scoring pieces of clay from the surface is reminiscent of Marc Leuthold's methods, whose work the artist admires greatly. She has an interest in creating relief patterns in common with him. In contrast to Leuthold, van Rheeden covers the entire object with an almost completely uniform structure. As a result, her work appears less flamboyant, far more completely in repose.

In the three-dimensional arrangement of these structural elements, Beatrijs van Rheeden takes her lead particularly from nature: "Patterns and matrices are logical. They can be found everywhere. In nature, for example, everything is made up of cells.

I adopt this regular order, the certainty of a basic pattern in my work." But architecture also serves the artist as a source of inspiration, with its constructed lines and its rhythms. The tent-like roof construction of the Munich Olympic Stadium from 1972 designed by Fred Otto readily comes to mind as a possible source of inspiration. Or the patterns of the horseshoe arches in the Mesquita cathedral in Córdoba, or Arabic tile decorations.

The arrangement of the patterns is a predominant theme in Beatrijs van Rheeden's work. The incisions are made with deliberation and in an ordered fashion. Yet the maker does not believe that the way the incisions in the form work out or the colour compositions they produce in the first group of works can be entirely planned. Chance also plays a part here.

In addition, because of the original organic form of the porcelain bodies, a dynamic change or even destruction of the geometric honeycomb symmetry cannot be excluded. But on the other hand, it is



the interruption of the otherwise almost mechanical regularity that adds a sense of visual tension. These small deviations are just as disconcerting as the irregularly arranged openings at the bottom of the honeycomb cells. The pieces thus lose their sleekness, gaining instead an enlivening emotionality. And this is precisely what the artist is trying to achieve. She wants to create emotional works and establish a link with her subconscious through her works. It is precisely these irregularities in the workmanship that indicate the pieces were made by hand and are not 3-D printed.

It is not only for the dynamic appearance of the created pieces that this artistic interaction with the material is important. In a dialogue with porcelain, a piece becomes concrete in the artist's imagination.

There are many ways to create an object. "Every incision in the surface of the piece is an artistic decision," says Beatrijs van Rheeden, emphasising how important each action is to her during the making process. During this process, ideas develop for new work, thus defining a further development in her artistic activity itself.

The artist sets great store in craftsmanship – she was duly excited when she stayed in China, in Jingdezhen, when she was able to work there as an artist in residence. The stimulating discussions, the excellent working conditions and the marvellous porcelain bodies were an outstanding basis to immerse herself in the material and to develop new ideas. We are all keenly looking forward to the artistic developments to come from Beatrijs van Rheeden in future. I am sure they will be a great source of joy.

Gudrun Schmidt-Esters M.A. is an art historian and since 2012 the director of the KERAMION in Frechen.

Beatrijs van Rheeden was born in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1965. She qualified as an art teacher in 1989, having specialised in ceramics at the ABK Minerva in Groningen, and then went on to take her M.A. at the Academy of Applied Art in Budapest, Hungary. During this time, she lived at the International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemét. After her M.A., she returned to the Netherlands and set up her studio in Rotterdam.

In 1995, she received a scholarship from the Dutch government. Her porcelain has been shown at the Korean Ceramics Biennale several times and in 2003 she was awarded a special prize there.

In 2009, Beatrijs received the Westerwald Prize in Höhr-Grenzhausen for her sculptural work.

Residencies in Poland, Hungary, and last year in Sanbao, China with Wenying Lee, have frequently given her work new impetus. After many exhibitions in the Netherlands and other countries, her work is present in various museums and private collections.

From **20 November – 20 December 2015**, Beatrijs van Rheeden is exhibiting at Projektraum 404, Hegelstraße 38, 20201 Bremen, Germany
<http://www.kulturbuero-bremen.de/>
<https://www.facebook.com/projektraum404>
<https://www.facebook.com/kultur.netz.9?ref=h>

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