

# In Studio with Andy Rogers

Evelyne Schoenmann



**A**ndy, first of all we would like to hear about your ceramics background

My journey with ceramics began in my grandmother's basement, where I watched her paint bisque figurines, sparking my early fascination with the medium. My father nurtured this passion, teaching me to paint and experiment with different finishes, laying the foundation for my lifelong love of ceramics.

Like many ceramic artists, I was drawn to more than just clay as a child - I loved to sketch. Drawing provided me with a sense of escapism, much like a gripping novel does for some. When I entered college, I initially pursued graphic design; however, it was clay that ultimately captured my soul. The potter's wheel, though challenging, captivated me, opening endless possibilities for artistic exploration.

After earning a BFA in ceramics and drawing, I spent a year working at Red Star Studios in Kansas City, Missouri, deepening both my technical expertise and understanding of ceramics as a career. Further studies in sculpture and glaze development at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln ultimately led me to establish my own studio in northern Missouri. Through these experiences, I learned that pursuing your passion as a career was not only fulfilling but viable.

Today, I showcase my work through juried art fairs and galleries across the country, where I find immense value not only in sharing my sculptures but also in engaging directly with collectors and enthusiasts. These conversations fuel my creativity, affirming the deep connection between my work and those who experience it.

*I discovered your work on social media and what immediately fascinated me were the bulbous shapes and exploding colours. When I first saw these shapes, I thought you must be an imaginative, life-affirming person.*

Thank you for your kind words! I'm deeply inspired by movement, vitality, and the organic forms found in nature - whether in the curves of a sprouting seed,

the human body's rhythm or the flow of air and water. My sculptures embody this sense of fullness and energy. I'm drawn to earthy tones for their warmth and depth, but I also love pairing them with vibrant pops of colour to create striking contrasts that bring excitement to each piece. This balance celebrates both subtlety and boldness, making each work come alive. Through my sculptures I hope to share my curiosity and inspire others.

*There is a photo on your website where you are kneeling on the grass in front of some of your objects. One has the feeling that, like a gardener, you are watching your works grow ...*

As both a ceramic artist and avid gardener, the metaphor feels especially fitting. Gardening has taught me patience, care, and an appreciation for organic growth - all of which shape my creative process. Just as I nurture plants from seed to bloom, I refine each ceramic piece, allowing it to evolve naturally. Both pursuits foster life, connection, and transformation. The vitality of nature, its cycles, and the interplay of colours in a garden often inspire my sculptures. For me, gardening and ceramics are deeply intertwined expressions of creativity and harmony, each grounding and energizing the other.

*It's immediately obvious that you get your ideas from nature. And yet I have the feeling that your works have hidden, overlooked depths ...*

I try to emulate, not copy nature. I'm inspired by our natural world - not just its beauty but its layered complexity and quiet resilience. My work evokes vitality and growth, yet many sculptures invite deeper exploration by requiring the viewer to open them, revealing hidden elements. This sense of discovery mirrors uncovering ecosystems beneath a rock or life within a tide pool - sparking curiosity and celebrating the extraordinary in the overlooked. Like a seed holding unseen potential, my sculptures reward engagement, encouraging connection with the quiet intricacies within each piece.

*Curiosity and the openness to develop existing things is certainly a prerequisite in our profession. Do you agree?*

I completely agree. Curiosity fuels exploration - driving me to experiment with forms, techniques, and unexpected

inspirations. I often push surfaces beyond their intended use, uncovering new possibilities. Openness allows me to reimagine existing ideas, breathing new life into traditions. In ceramics, these qualities work together, ensuring even familiar techniques lead to discovery. They keep our work dynamic and engaging, both for

ourselves and those who experience it.

*When we discussed which of the shapes you would like to show in our article, you immediately had one in mind. Why do you want to show this one in particular?*

This sculpture embodies my artistic philosophy, capturing vitality and movement





through its organic form. Its fluid, curving shapes evoke natural growth, reminiscent of unfolding petals or leaves. The interplay between smooth, flowing areas and richly textured details reflects my fascination with opposing elements - how they interact and enhance one another. The glossy green surface transitions into deeper tones, while the lighter, textured interior adds contrast and depth. The open, hollow

centre enhances its sense of expansion, inviting discovery and engagement. Derived from a sketch, bringing it to life in clay was a challenge that pushed my skills and imagination, transforming vision into tangible form. It feels both grounded and expressive - capturing transformation, structure, and spontaneity, creating a presence that draws you in while rewarding deeper exploration.

*Now we are curious: please describe the technical process from the beginning to the finished and fired piece.*

My process begins at the potter's wheel - a foundation rooted in my background in functional pottery. I still rely on the wheel as my primary forming tool, allowing my sculptures to naturally embody a sense of roundness and fluidity. For this piece, I start by throwing a conical or "tear drop" form, which I then cut open to shape the curved opening. As the clay stiffens, I use a light bulb to gently push out the lobes, creating an organic form that enhances the sculpture's movement.

Next, I texture the sides and bottom, ensuring every surface contributes to the piece's presence. Coils of clay are added to create visual interest - reminiscent of the folds of a leaf or the seams of a seed's skin. Once the piece reaches the bone-dry stage, I apply various terra sigillata, appreciating how they interact with the oxide washes that follow the bisque firing. The drip and run patterns from the terra sigillata deepen the surface complexity, adding dynamic layers of movement. Rather than burnishing, I prefer the raw, textured quality of the refined slip, which enhances the finished piece's character.

My art education fostered experimentation, pushing boundaries, and embracing the unexpected. I treat surfaces as canvases, layering techniques to refine



coloration, texture, and depth, ensuring intentional evolution in each piece.

Once bisque-fired, I apply an oxide wash, wiping away the excess so it settles into the recesses while subtly staining the terra sig. When the piece emerges from the kiln for the last time, I refine its coloration and shading with airbrushed acryl-

ics, gaining greater control over the final surface. This step allows me to guide the visual narrative while staying true to my creative instincts. It also connects me to my earliest memories of painting with my grandmother and father - an influence woven into my artistic journey. Once I achieve the desired finish, I seal the piece

with an acrylic spray, choosing matte or gloss based on the effect I envision.

Every step in this process is an opportunity to explore, experiment, and refine, making each piece a true reflection of my creative journey.

*Can you tell us anything about future projects, wishes or ideas*

Looking ahead, I'm eager to expand my "Wall Seeds" into larger, immersive installations - transforming spaces with organic, dynamic compositions. One vision is a large wall grouping inspired by nature's cycles of growth, decay, and renewal. I'm constantly experimenting with new techniques, especially surface treatments, to keep my process dynamic.

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview partner is **Sylvia Nagy, USA/Hungary**

Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist, writer and curator. She is a member of AIC/AIC and lives and works in Basel, Switzerland.

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