

In Studio with Antoinette Badenhorst

Antoinette's number one passion seems to be porcelain. Not many ceramists know as much about this material as she does. In workshops she regularly alleviates the students' fear of working with it. In this talk with her, we try to learn from Antoinette about "the many faces of porcelain".

Evelyne Schoenmann

Antoinette, your website is very professionally made. Where do you find the time for the upkeep?

I am very fortunate to have my husband Koos as my web designer, photographer and videographer. His technology background and analytical experience help me to get some advantage. Some years back he took photography classes and soon after that he was published as an art photographer with my translucent porcelain.

and our experience and of course to see more of the world. Today we are American citizens with an expanded family. Our grandchildren vary from ages 4 to 9 years old. My current ceramics style is a mix of influences from my upbringing in South Africa and Namibia, where I was raised, to our current lifestyle in the USA.

In South Africa you also worked with stoneware and earthenware clay. Now it's exclusively the smooth and translucent

pottery, I was taught (incorrectly) that you first need experience to work with porcelain. Today I absolutely believe that anyone can work with porcelain. It is a myth that beginners should first gain experience with other clay bodies. What is needed is an understanding of the character of porcelain and how that differs from stoneware or earthenware clay.

Just out of curiosity: have you ever been to Jingdezhen in China?



3 Years ago he became my videographer.

Koos and you are South African born and now live in the USA. Can you tell us about your life's journey?

I was born in Johannesburg and I grew up in Namibia. I met and married Koos in South Africa and we raised 3 daughters there. When Koos was invited to work in the USA our family moved to Mississippi. It was a wonderful chance to ex-

"white gold" for you. Why porcelain?

Growing up in primitive as well as civilized communities influenced my work on several levels. Exposure to the classic, timeless influences of Shakespeare and Tchaikovsky took me on a natural path with porcelain. I bought Peter Lane's book "Studio Porcelain" with award money from a ceramics competition in 1992. I already knew then that I would work in porcelain, but, just like so many other

Oh, I wish to go ... maybe one day. I would love to do a residency there and maybe someone will invite me some time.

In the photo strip we can see you working on one of your ice sculptures. Will you take us through the process please?

I always liked to use organic materials to create ceramic objects. Upholstery foam is one of those materials. Once I decided on a form that will work for a

base, I will dip it in thick porcelain slip and squeeze the foam so that the clay can soak into the foam, leaving some to form a thin translucent crust once it is fired. It is very flimsy while it is still wet, so I use different sturdy materials to form an armature to support and keep the clay and soaked foam in the position that I want to model it.

Once the base becomes a little drier, it is time to choose a bowl to sit at the top. It must balance with the base from all sides. Bowls suggests content and therefore form an important part of my repertoire. Sometimes I will throw a bowl on the wheel, or form it over a balloon, but in this case I chose to use a press mould. I created an envelope from 2 press-moulded shells that I joined together. The joints must be very well secured. One of the lesser known characteristics of porcelain is that the clay can easily be re-wetted so that it can be altered. This is the part that I like the most, because I can use freshly cut strips of clay and add them to help re-open the upper seams so that light can

of the base stays only white, with glaze sprayed on in areas where it may cast a shadow. The intent is to make it look like chunks of ice or sea water, touched by the shadows in nature.

Have you ever considered painting on the porcelain surface?

Funny that you ask: I've painted some in the past. I would love to develop a decorating process in which I use different techniques to obtain a depth in colour on the porcelain surface. I recently created small translucent bowls with dark, moving brush strokes on them. The contrast between dark shadow and translucent light was well received. I see a possible new series in my future.

For quite some time now you offer e-courses. Can you explain to our readers how an e-course works?

Koos and I take a hands-on workshop and translate it into an online workshop. We record all the videos in my porcelain studio. During the e-course students have

and boarding expenses. All attendees get a "front row" seat and they get access to me on a one-on-one basis. We eliminate and evaluate problems through images and short videos. In 2016 we are adding new and very experienced potters to our teachers' list.

I am sure your agenda for the current year is already full...

2015 was a very busy year and it seems like 2016 is going to be even busier. My first 2016 one-man exhibition was booked for the middle of January and our first new online classes for 2016 follow soon after that. Koos is planning to present a photography class to teach artists to photograph their own work. Potters are especially interested in photographing translucent porcelain.

The highlight of the year is our workshop-tour in Europe. We are looking forward to start in Switzerland with the theme "Understand Porcelain and Push the Limits". We will also teach in Spain, Italy, France, Slovenia and Belgium.



photos - Koos Badenhorst

touch the interior and colour spills out. The elegant flowing line of my bowls is a huge contrast from the base, but when the two parts find each other in balance and harmony; it becomes one piece of art, juxtaposing opposite sides of life. When the envelope is dry enough, I will attach it to the base. At this stage it is still a mix between foam and clay, but once it is fired, the foam disappears and base and bowl become one translucent object. I will glaze the interior of the bowl, but most

unlimited access to all course material, including documents to give students as much information as possible. For each workshop we have a social media page that is our online "classroom". Here students mingle with questions and answers and share their work and experiences. Once a week we e-mail Questions and Answers and/or reviews to our students. We love the process, because it gives potters from around the world an opportunity to "attend" a workshop, without travel

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview will be with

André von Martens, (D)

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