

In Studio with Antonella Cimatti

Antonella's aura of refinement infuses her "crespine". Her works are so light they seem to float. They are reminiscent of lace. She explains here how she found a way to create this sense of lightness.

Evelyne Schoenmann

Antonella, at the Istituto d'Arte in Faenza you were a student of the master, Carlo Zauli. How did working with him influence you?

Yes, for me he was a true master who taught me an artistic approach. He gave me the enthusiasm to become a ceramist and an artist. And he taught me the importance of devoting your life to art and to one of the oldest media of humankind: not only to study the various ceramic materials but also to observe the influence and processes of other art forms that lead to innovation.

also applies to this capital city of ceramics, so there is a danger of encountering tradition with too much respect. But all in all, I think it has been an advantage to grow up here. Although Faenza is a small town, there are several important ceramics institutions. For instance, there is the International Ceramics Museum MIC or the CNR, the National Research Centre. The museum has an extremely comprehensive collection of ceramics from all over the world and from all ages as well as a library with over 62,000 books on ceramics. For me this is a continuing

in Italy and elsewhere and how it influenced your methods.

My first trip to Asia in 1981 took me to Japan. I was 25 and I was able to participate in a cultural exchange with the twinned city of Toki-shi as part of a delegation from Faenza. I was immediately fascinated by Japan, and without wishing to make too much use of philosophical concepts, I would like to mention the love of beauty that was given to me and which impressed me in Japan. It is a way of looking at beauty that affects a mysterious inner world. You have to work hard



Do you feel it is an advantage or a disadvantage for a ceramist to be born and to grow up in Faenza, the ceramics city?

I am probably a typical example of how Faenza can shape and educate someone. I was born in Faenza and attended all the schools here. And with the exception of studying at the academy in Bologna and a brief spell teaching in other towns, my whole life is centred on this place. I think Italian artists tend to be weighed down by their cultural and artistic heritage. This

source of inspiration. Even as a student at the Istituto d'Arte and later as a teacher there, I was in touch with ceramists and artists from all over the world. Many of them came to Faenza to work here or to study in greater depth. When I later felt the need to travel and to gain new experience abroad, my training, which was also sound on the technical front, was a recommendation.

Tell us something about your training

to earn it. In recent years I have been to China and South Korea several times. Each time, I returned home with some small technical secrets about porcelain, a material that is almost unknown in Faenza. From an aesthetic angle, I was not influenced by Asia but by Italian fashion and Italian design. In recent years, a major tendency towards lightness and attention to detail has manifested itself, an attitude that is very close to the way I work and live.

Although you make work in majolica or installations with fibre optics, I am sure our readers would like to learn more about the background and the making of your delicate “crespine”. Could you tell us something about them?

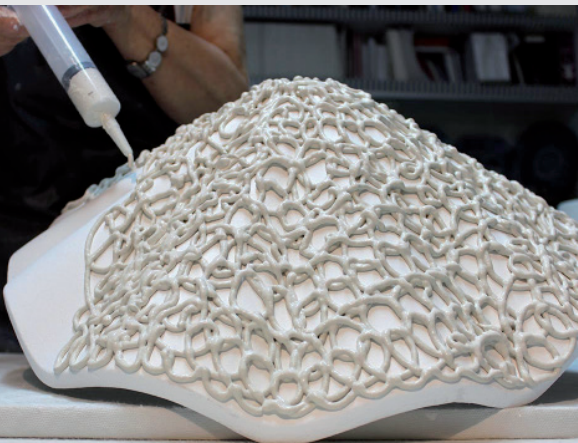
As a material per se, clay is hard and heavy. My goal was to achieve an impression of lightness with ceramics, both with regard to weight and visual appearance. My intention was to create a kind of lace, a mesh or woven fabric. With this, I wanted to emphasise women’s creative powers. A lighter, fragile, discreet, fresh kind of creativity was to get a chance. I took my inspiration from “crespine”, an ornamental object in the majolica tradition that was very popular at court in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. I have always been fascinated by these historical objects. In 2005, I started to experiment with porcelain paperclay and to reinterpret the crespine; this is how my collection of these items came about. In contrast to a traditional approach, where bowls thrown on the wheel were perforated and cut, I made my pieces with extrud-

veloping a suitable body, there were other problems to solve: I wanted the interior of the pieces to be smooth, so I had to work on a convex hump mould with the related problem that it is tricky to lift the piece off the mould, not to mention the question of shrinkage. Plaster was not suitable for the moulds. After I had made my delicate forms with slip threads, I could not lift them off the mould without breaking them. The solution was a special mould making process from a material that I developed myself, which permitted first the shrinkage of the paperclay piece and then allowed me to lift the fragile object off it easily. Drying is very fast and only takes one day, and then a high temperature firing to 1260°C in an electric kiln usually follows straight away. Even the glazed crespine are only fired once, the glaze is applied to the dry greenware. My self-glazing porcelain with its lovely matt surface is only fired once too. It was a huge but stimulating challenge to reinterpret objects that originated in ages long past with modern technology and a contemporary philosophy.

how “Ghost” was born, a conceptual project for interiors that creates a mood between design and art installation. The basic idea is to illustrate everyday items that are all around us, or items in a museum, and with their shadows to create “illusory”, light artworks.

The list of awards in competitions, workshops, residencies abroad and your exhibitions is very long. Are you satisfied with what you have achieved or have you got other plans for the future?

I am very satisfied with the results achieved so far because in my career as an artist I have been able to travel a great deal and have been fortunate enough to work with the leading Italian art critics such as Filiberto Menna, Enrico Crispolti, Vittorio Fagone and Franco Solmi. In 2011 I was invited to the Biennale in Venice by Vittorio Sgarbi and by Silvana Annichiarico to the Triennale in Milan for the Triennale Design Museum until 2017. I have a lot of plans but I am superstitious enough not to speak about them yet!



ed threads of slip (dripping threads) from a slip trailer or a pastry syringe. In contrast to the traditional method, mine is additive and not subtractive. With this idea and an image in my mind, I first had to master and perfect the special technique to achieve the desired results. It took nearly a year. I experimented with various clay bodies, various syringes and piping bags for confectionery. For this collection, it was essential to conduct tests with porcelain and additives of paper. Besides de-

In your studio, I saw these narrow mural pieces which throw shadows on the wall when they are illuminated from beneath. Would you tell us something about them or is it still too early?

This most recent installation is made with ultra-modern technology. With a laser cutter, the forms are cut out of a 0.6 mm vitrified aluminium oxide sheet, a material found in technical ceramics. A complex digital analysis of light projection accompanies this project. This is

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Evelyne Schoenmann will be conducting her next interview with **Agnes Husz (Hungary and Japan)**. Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist. She lives and works in Basel, Switzerland and Liguria, Italy
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