

# MARGARETA DAEPP

Evelyne Schoenmann

## *The Fascination of East & West*



**L**inear. This is the first word that occurred to me when I saw the winning piece by Margareta Daep, *Bosporus Set Hexagon*, at Officine Saffi in Milan in the early summer of 2014. The play of function and design, emptiness and fullness, multipart structure and Middle Eastern colour is fascinating. Linear, but not only because of the precise

lines. When I later met Margareta in person, I realised that she consistently pursues her fascination with East and West.

This fascination may well have originated in her artist's residency in Shigaraki, Japan, in 2005. Firings typically happen there in an anagama (tunnel) kiln. This means that the ceramics are fired in direct contact with the flames, which lick around the

pots. Since round objects are particularly suited to this, Margareta has been working with the form of the cylinder since then. She certainly has the courage to set her own working methods against traditional Japanese ones, working with slipcast forms, which are untypical in Japan. She has remained faithful to this method. This residency in Shigaraki has led to the production of seven two-part vessels, the Lotus series. One part is lacquered. All of the vessels bear the names of Japanese flowers. Margareta Daep was given an introduction to *urushi*, the art of lacquering, from a female master, also during her stay in Shigaraki.

Back in Switzerland, the Lotus series was followed shortly afterwards by the Tokyo Line series. For this, Daep transferred the colourful map of the Tokyo underground railway system onto porcelain by means of ceramic onglaze printing, coating the upper part of the vessels with automobile paint. These flawless vessels are also in two parts; they are named after the main underground railway lines such as Shinjunku, Ginza, Mita, etc. The traditional lacquer of the Lotus series and the ultramodern car paint for Tokyo Line form an interesting contrast. We can look forward to discovering the next series.

Still under the influence of the East, Daep then travelled to China in 2008, to Beijing, where she stayed at a hotel, a traditional building with a courtyard and a garden. It is situated in an old quarter. The typical network of old streets around the hotel, the so-called *hutongs*, was the inspiration for the next series of vessels, the Hutong series. The technique of ceramic printing and automobile paint is the same as the Tokyo Line series. However, the Hutong vessels consist of three parts: at the bottom a white porcelain plate with incisions in the rim symbolising petals. The middle part is a bowl sprayed bright red with car paint. Red is the national colour of China. In the upper part, at first one sees a confusion of lines, but with a closer study of Daep's work, they turn out to be the hutongs themselves.



opposite page  
Tokio Line Ginza, 2012, edition of 3 + 1 AP, porcelain, ceramic print, car paint Ø 28 cm, h 23 cm

above  
Lotus Series Hasu, 2006, individual piece, anagama firing and Japanese lacquer, Ø 29 cm, h 25cm

below  
Bosporus\_Set Pentagon, 2012, edition of 7 + 2 AP, porcelain glazed





It would actually be possible to take one of these pots and to find one's way around the district like a map! In 2011, the collection, The Emperor's Choice and The Empress's Choice are added. These are porcelain cylinders measuring 3.5 cm in height (the Emperor 7.5 cm of course), with a white exterior and a gold interior for the Emperor, symbolising his golden robes, and for the Empress there are also the typical colours of the robes such as yellow and blue, green and pink and turquoise and red.

Then in 2012, she travelled to Istanbul. And here too, East and West, which can be found in the series Bosporus. The vessels – and Margareta Daepf remains faithful to the principle of linearity – are cylindrical, consist of three parts and are cast in porcelain. The ornamentation induced the artist to make a further study of European and Arabic ceramic traditions. The vertical cobalt blue lines divide the vessels up into five, six or eight zones. Or in this series too there is a symbolic element like the vertical red rim of the bowl taking up the colour of the Izmir tulip. The Bosporus series: an ongoing search for the balance between two traditions.

And then back to Japan. The exhibition

above  
Oribe Ensemble, 2013, individual pieces  
installation 2.70 m x 1.50 m

left  
Hutong Set light blue, 2010, edition of 7 + 2 AP  
porcelain, ceramic print, car paint

at the gallery Ligne Treize in Carouge in October 2014 showed Margareta Daepp with her latest fascination: Oribe.

The Oribe style developed in the environs of Seto and Gifu, going back to the influence of samurai tea master Furuta Oribe (1544-1615) on the unique dynamic aesthetic in ceramics, painting, fashion and lacquer: geometric and floral patterns combined with strongly contrasting areas of colour.

Based on the three basic forms of the circle, the square and the hexagon, Daepp has developed three series: she allocated porcelain as a material to the circle, the square to green Oribe and the hexagon to black Oribe. Each basic form is executed in a different technique, a different clay, a different glaze and a different colour. In addition, she developed the form of a geometric blossom and a second hexagon form. She had both made by *urushi* master Kei Nishimura in wood and *urushi*. Typical local sweets cast in sugar on seasonal themes gave Daepp the inspiration for a new series to complement her latest one: choosing the image of a plum blossom, she enlarged the imperfect form and completed her set with the silver-glazed form of the blossom.

A fragmentary ensemble has been created consisting of six flat slabs in a very small edition that, with its typical materials, techniques and colours, references the rich culture of Seto and its ceramics.

It is exciting to see how bravely and naturally the artist reacts to a difficult theme like East and West. We will be only too glad to accompany her on further trips to other traditions.

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**Margareta Daepp**, born in 1959, lives and works in Bern and Geneva. After graduation from the School of Design in Bern, she continued her training under Setsuko Nagasawa at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs in Geneva and opened a studio in Bern in 1984. In 1989, relocation to Berlin. She studied as a guest at the University of the Arts in Berlin under Rebecca Horn and Isa Genzken. In 1993, invited to the European Ceramic Works Centre in 's-Hertogenbosch, NL, as artist in residence. From 1994-95, working visit in a studio in New York.

Back in Bern she opened her current studio and in 1999 she was appointed lecturer in the ceramics department at the CFP Arts Appliqués in Geneva. Two further residencies in 2005 and 2013 took Daepp back to Japan. In the two centres, the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park and the International Ceramic & Glass Art Exchange Program in Seto, she immersed herself in traditional Japanese ceramics.

Fascinated by Japanese aesthetics, Daepp wrote her MA thesis at the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst in Basel, in the department of design and art, on "How does a simple, radical aesthetic develop?" She has been a member of the IAC since 2006. She has been awarded several prizes and scholarships for her work. Many of her pieces are in leading museum collections in Switzerland and abroad.

Oribe Set, 2013, wood with urushi lacquer and stoneware with black oribe-glaze, 75 x 40 cm, h 6 cm

