

In Studio with Corrie Bain

Corrie begins her Buncheong workshops with making the stamps so that in the end every participant can find their own designs in the inlay on the object. As they work, they learn about the background and history of this ancient and beautiful Korean tradition. We can read about it in this interview.

by Evelyne Schoenmann

Corrie, our readers will ask themselves: a Scottish ceramist explaining Buncheong technique? But you lived quite a few years in Korea, didn't you? And also in other countries around the world. Would you tell us your story?

I was born in a remote part of Northern Scotland, and grew up in a small village on an island in Greece. Being surround-

searching and studying Oriental ceramics with Korean ceramists in South and North Korea, then China (The Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen, Yunnan, Xian, Yixing), Japan (Mashiko, Kyoto, Bizen) and Thailand. One of the ceramists who was pivotal in inspiring me to make Buncheong ware was Korean ceramist Lee In Chin, whom I met at the KOCEF Biennale and lived near me in Gyeonggi-do Province,

valuable gift. After spending most of my life travelling, I'm finally realizing that you don't always have to be on the move physically in order to be on a journey!

Before we talk about the Buncheong technique, please tell us about your signature pieces, the beautiful stretched slabs...

They are semi-functional vessels related to the exploration of visual dynam-



ed by artists and having a ceramist as a father meant I was in contact with clay since early childhood. I began drawing lessons when I was 12, which led me to art school. I studied a Bachelor of Arts in Design and Applied Arts specialising in Ceramics at Edinburgh College of Art, was an exchange student at Alfred University of Ceramics in New York, and achieved an Honours Degree in 2003. I exhibited at New Designers in London, in international galleries, and ran a residential summer-school teaching ceramics in Greece for three years, before emigrating to South Korea. I spent two years re-

Icheon. Returning to Europe, I became a student of English ceramist Seth Cardew.

And now you are the right hand of the owner of the ceramics school El Torn in Barcelona. Did you settle down?

For the past 7 years I've been working as a freelance throwing and hand building teacher at El Torn. It's been a place for me to learn, focus and grow. Martin and Paula Loew have been instrumental in my development. Before working in El Torn I had no real business acumen or experience, and when someone puts their trust in you to help run a business, it's an in-

ics, kinetics and movement. I call them "cymatics", from the Greek word: κύμα, meaning "wave", and the study of sound wave phenomena created by Swiss scientist Hans Jenny, a follower of Rudolf Steiner anthroposophy.

The surfaces are treated with techniques that mimic sound waves, the effects of time, weather, and erosion on matter. They have central symmetry, balancing on a curve. Sometimes they are interactive, rocking on an axis or spinning in a circle. Like a pendulum, they evoke a sense of rhythm, a fundamental element of nature.

Buncheong: there is a story behind this traditional Korean stoneware. Would you tell us what you know about it?

Curator Soyoung Lee wrote:

“If Goryeo celadon embodies classical elegance, Buncheong ware represents experimental spirit”

Buncheong owes much to the celadon of the preceding Goryeo Dynasty, high quality vessels used for Buddhist rituals and royalty. But the Mongol invasions in 1231, and subsequent decline of Buddhist culture triggered a break away from aristocratic traditions. Buncheong replaced celadon in the 14th century, embracing a more liberal manner of expression and was enjoyed by aristocracy and common people alike. Nowadays it is recognized as the most innovative style of Korean ceramics produced during the Joseon Dynasty, renowned for its playful designs, omission of detail, and whimsical expressions. Gradually replaced by porcelain, Buncheong tradition ended with

Buncheong can be found in vessels decorated with repetitive, bold stamp motifs, providing a link to abstract or minimalist expressionism in contemporary art. After making a piece, when leather-hard, the surface is stamped with flower designs that look like chrysanthemums. Slip inlay is applied, and when almost dry, the extra slip is scraped off, sometimes leaving excess slip on the surface to soften the look. Traditionally the pieces are fired to a low bisque at about 700 degrees, glazed with a transparent glaze, then re-fired in a wood fired kiln in a reduction atmosphere, to 1270-1300 degrees Celsius. The pieces that I have made in the pictures are fired in an electric kiln to 1240°C, using a local black clay, porcelain slip inlay, and transparent glaze. It's the little imperfections that make Buncheong ware so authentic and unrestrained, I enjoy working quickly whilst making them and leaving all the marks of the making intact. They tell us the story of how they were made.

glazes are more rustic, and less refined.

What lies in the near future for you, Corrie?

Currently I'm working on sculptural pieces with social and political concepts. One is called New Life related to the Syrian refugee crisis, and the other Mushroom Politics, to do with Brexit. I'm exhibiting at Documenta 14, an exhibition which takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany. It's a collaborative piece called Banquet Table Tales, designed by multidisciplinary artist Antoni Miralda. A wall installation measuring 11 x 4 metres, made of 60 ceramic plates with sculptural interventions depicting Grimm Brothers fairy tales, it's exhibited in the permanent collection of the Grimm Brothers Museum alongside the works of political activist Ai Wei Wei. With Barcelona as my base, I hope to continue teaching, do a ceramics residency, exhibit and sell my work, and travel.



the Japanese invasions of Korea between 1592 and 1598. Recently there has been a revival of Buncheong and potters worldwide are rediscovering its modern aesthetic value.

In the picture series we see lots of stamps, which remind me of flower heads. Stamps are at the beginning of working in the Buncheong technique, aren't they? Please guide us through the special technique.

The major application techniques are stamping, incising, slip inlay, brushed slip, painting with iron pigment, and dipping. But I feel that the real essence of

Is there a special glaze one has to use when doing the Buncheong style? At the Leeum museum in Seoul I saw white and grey objects, but also to my astonishment a light green and blue...

The glazes used in early Buncheong ware were similar to those of the celadon tradition of the preceding Goryeo dynasty i.e 'Sanggam' ware. Typically, Buncheong ware glazes contain less iron oxide and are not as green in tone. The defining characteristics that differentiate it from celadon are the use of white slip covering a coarser iron-rich clay, coated with a clear semi translucent feldspar glaze. The clay and

CORRIE BAIN Ceramic Artist
El Torn Barcelona
C/Àvila 124, 2º 1º | 08018 Barcelona
Spain
corrie_bain@yahoo.co.uk
www.corriebainceramics.com
<https://www.instagram.com/corriebainceramics/>

Evelyne Schoenmann's
next interview is with
Julia Saffer, Germany

Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist. She lives and works in Basel, Switzerland and Liguria, Italy.
www.schoenmann-ceramics.ch