

# In studio with Beatrijs van Rheeden

By Evelyne Schoenmann

*Beatrijs, last year you won the New Ceramics Prize at the Oldenburg International Ceramics Fair. Congratulations again. What does this success mean to you?*

The prize means a lot to me. It means recognition from ceramics lovers and colleagues, which shows that they appreciate my work. The introduction from Martin McWilliam was a tribute in itself and I am very glad that abstract forms still have a place in ceramics.

And then the invitation to exhibit at the Landesmuseum is a real challenge for the artist. A very special space like this makes great demands on me.

Leuthold. By carving clay, he made very stimulating sculptures. That was inspirational for me. I didn't feel that at the time. I was simply astonished by his patience as he worked.

But later, four years later, I was in my studio in Barendrecht and I had a deadline in two weeks for a solo exhibition at Terra Delft Gallery. And then I suddenly hit the wall with the work I had made up to then. I sensed that I had exhausted that series and that I needed something new. Then two images of things I had experienced came together: firstly the thrown work by Kap Sun Hwang, which I had seen in Stockholm in 2006, where I rea-

graduating from school I would go on to art school. After just the first year there, I had decided on ceramics.

*You have a special link with the ceramics school in Hungary?*

In my fourth year at the Minerva Art Academy in Groningen, there was an exchange programme between Minerva and the Academy of Applied Art in Budapest. With a small group of students, I went to Hungary and that is how I got to know the Ceramics Studio in Kecskemet and met the people there.

With Kecskemet, Siklos and Pecs, Hungary has a rich contemporary ceramics



I am also delighted to have the chance to do a residency again with financial support through the prize, and I can hardly wait until next year, when I will go on this residency.

*When did you first have the idea to carve ceramic sculptures?*

In 2008, I spent four weeks at the International Ceramics Studio in Kecskemet to make a large-scale installation for the Keramion in Frechen. I was working in a studio next door to the studio of Marc

lised that thick-walled porcelain can be very interesting, and secondly there was the carving by Marc Leuthold that I had seen in 2008. Influenced by this, I began to make something new and the first pieces made it into the solo exhibition..

*Can you tell us something about your ceramic background?*

I grew up in a family that is very interested in art. My father was a painter and an art historian and my sister was a ceramist. It was obvious to me that after

culture. Ceramic artists from all over the world come to Kecskemet. There are all the facilities there, from saltglazing to raku in gas and woodfired kilns and you have the freedom to try out completely new things.

*Your carved forms look abstract, graphic and above all evenly irregular. What is it that you are looking for?*

To lay a strict grid over a freely shaped form, especially one with lots of curves – that inspires me, how to bring two worlds together.

*I read that you are fascinated by the "chaos within a structure". Could you explain that to us?*

I think there must be a balance for every one of us. You need a structure but too much order becomes boring and too much chaos simply creates unrest – in life as well as in a form. It fascinates me when these two worlds meet and wrestle with each other.

*In a video by Mels Boom you can be seen making one of your sculptures from start to finish. In our photo series here, the object is bigger perhaps but the technique is the same. Could you talk us through the stages of your work?*

I always handbuild the forms. From the start, I observe the form and decide

When I have finished with this, I take some time to look at it. Only when I am really happy with it can I start to carve. Very often, I cut out the whole piece only roughly. Then a large part of the porcelain has been cut away and the form is easier to handle.

*Is distortion or even collapse at high temperatures in the kiln a problem?*

Usually not too much of a problem. As I handbuild the forms they are sturdy enough. Of course the form changes slightly during the firing.

*At this year's Oldenburg Ceramics Fair (2018), you will have a solo exhibition in Oldenburg Schloss. Can you tell us anything about that yet?*

I will be going to Kecskemet in Hungary. That is planned for August 2019.

*And what lies in the future for Beatrijs van Rheeden?*

Next summer, I am going to Kecskemet and I would like to work there for some time. Germany is an interesting place for ceramics and I hope to do more exhibitions here. I also like giving workshops where I can pass on my technique. For instance, in the Bosener Mühle by the Bostalsee, I give a porcelain workshop every year. It is a highly inspirational place where you can exchange views with a great many people who are inspired by ceramics.



where it should go. For such a large form, I need two or three hours and a complicated form takes longer of course. If I do not like the way the form is developing, I cut it back a little and build it up again. When it is finished, it must dry a little. For the first steps, the form can still be a little bit soft but for the defining carving, the form should be leather hard. But before I start carving, I first have to transfer the pattern to the form. I draw the pattern on the form with the same knife I use when I am carving later on.

I have lots of plans. I am not sure yet how it will all come together. A series of large lying figures is one plan and I would like to make a small-scale installation for the space. Also I am hoping to make some pieces in the style of the one that I won the prize for, a more Baroque form.

*Besides the solo exhibition in Oldenburg Schloss, the NEW CERAMICS Prize you won in 2017 includes a residency at a school of your choice. Which one have you chosen?*

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview is with **Adil Writer**, India.

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