

In Studio with Luca Tripaldi

Evelyne Schoenmann



Luca, I wonder: if you had not become a ceramist, what else would have interested you as a profession?

I've always been passionate about green landscapes, then probably I would have become a landscape architect specialized in cemetery design.

The beginnings of your passion for plastic art was in working for theatrical productions. Can you tell us more about those times?

For 10 years, I was lucky enough to work for the most prestigious opera houses in Italy and France. The interesting part of that job was to find the best solution to allow singers to sing, move

and feel comfortable wearing the facial or body implants, and please the theatre director and the costume designer as well, because they often used to forget they were realizing an opera and not a movie. In a movie the performance is recorded while in an opera house the show is entirely performed and sung live. Working in opera houses allowed me to consider the hidden potential of any material and have an eclectic approach in my work.

And later, how did it happen that porcelain became your preferred material?

I discovered porcelain in a pottery

market in France. Chatting with some French ceramists about the properties of the porcelain, I fell in love with this clay. Then I moved to the Côte d'Azur for one year to have easy access to porcelain, a material rather unknown and hard to source in the 90s in Italy.

In preparing this interview I got the impression that, as an artist, you are not easily graspable. And that's meant as a compliment. You told me you always change style, subject, inspiration and you use other material like metal and resin as well. What's your view on the importance of an artist having a so called "language", a recognizabil-

ity at first sight of their work of art?

I think that being particularly interested in having one's own recognizable language is a "personal ego affair" and a request of art galleries for their business, because they need to "label" each artist. Personally, I'm not interested, life is too short, I like to spend my time experiencing as much as possible. It is so depressing to see the work of an artist without any change in 30-40 years, always the same pieces on display, only different in colour or size, what a bore!

Together with workshops at La Meridiana in Tuscany and group online courses, you offer another interesting type of online course. A kind of one-on-one individual lesson. What does the course include?

I have developed a personal online format with the aim of making learning easier for my students and allowing them to quickly achieve a remarkable level of autonomy. Although students follow the lessons from home, it is as if they were in my workshop, sitting in the first row enjoying a privileged point of view on the details of the techniques that I am showing. To participate they need just to download the Zoom application and book a quick test with me to verify the quality of their connection. Once enrolled, they receive very detailed summary sheets about all the making processes and a list of the materials and tools needed with the link to buy them online. The students attend a tutorial lesson and a reminder lesson in which they watch the demonstrations, they listen to the explanations and they ask questions, but they don't work with me yet. These two lessons are available for groups of Italian and French speakers, and as individual lessons for English speakers, because it is impossible to find a date or a time that suits people living in different countries in the world. After these two lessons the students are able to practise the techniques learned and make the exercises assigned. When they wish and they feel ready, they can book the last lesson. It is an individual





lesson for every student. In this way they get the teacher's feedback and if necessary, they can review the missing steps in the making process.

Now on to your piece for this interview, consisting of two half-spheres with a fascinating inner life. What are the individual steps to get this appealing result?

When I make these porcelain pieces, that I like to call "geodes", I start throwing first the shell of the piece using a Limoges PT300B porcelain. I throw a pointed hemisphere upside down. Once it has reached a semi-leatherhard consistency, I turn the shape to refine its mouth and get a very thin lip. Then I take the measure of its diameter and I wrap the piece in a plastic bag to keep it at leatherhard consistency. I cut out some strips from a paper towel roll, and then I prepare some slip-casting porcelain, I use the Limoges PC189B, it is the slip casting version of the PT300B porcelain. I prepare the slip pretty thick using the following dilution: 50 gr of water + 100 gr of porcelain. Using a big brush, I apply the slip on the paper strips only on one side. When the slip is still wet, I roll each paper strip around the next one, overlapping them until I get a big roll having the diameter of the mouth of the shell that I have previously thrown. To roll the strips more easily and get a clean layering I use a stick as rolling centre and while the roll diameter gradually increases, I dry the roll with a heat-gun. Before introducing the roll in the shell, I apply on the inner side a generous layer of slip, then I proceed to fit it in. I retouch the gap between the mouth of the shell and the roll with a little bit of a very liquid slip. At this stage the shell is still at leatherhard consistency, when it dries and shrinks, it will keep the roll well lodged. I bisque the piece at 900° C placing the side with all the layers on a pillow of ceramic fibre to avoid damaging them. The firing schedule used is: 120 C° per hour up to 900° C – End. Using a vacuum cleaner, I remove all the paper ash residues and



the ceramic residues in between the porcelain layers, then I high fire the piece at 1280° C placed directly on the kiln shelf without the ceramic fibre. The schedule firing used is: 150 C° per hour up to 650°C and skip to 1280° C – End.

Since you work mainly with porcelain, what are your precautions to avoid deformation in the high temperature kiln?

I work exclusively with “hard porcelains”, they warp less compared to the “soft porcelains”. I usually fire most of my pieces buried in silica sand or alumina micro-spheres in saggars specifically designed for each piece.

From where do you get inspiration for your multifaceted works?

The pieces pictured in this article are just an experiment of layering using paper and porcelain slip. I have only made a few of them because I am not really interested in shapes or effects that resemble something that you can find in nature. I am inspired by design and any kind of art-craft piece, I like to see the skill of the maker that gives the uniqueness to the piece and the originality of the way the material is used to create it.

You wrote to me: “I’m unfaithful in everything I do, what I love today, probably I won’t love tomorrow anymore”. Nevertheless, would you still try to look into the near future of Luca Tripaldi the artist for us?

I will certainly deal with art and educational projects in the near future. What is difficult for me is to predict which materials and subjects will grab my interest. You know, I love to be surprised by life!

Luca Tripaldi

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview partner is **Lee Jong Min, South Korea.**

Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist, writer and curator. She is an AIC/IAC member, and lives and works in Basel. www.schoenmann-ceramics.ch