

In studio with Janina Myronova

EVELYNE SCHOENMANN

Janina, let's start with your biography and your professional career.

I was born and raised in Ukraine, and I started my ceramics training there. Firstly, at Art College in Donetsk, and later I continue my studies at the Lviv National Academy of Arts in Ukraine. In 2012 I started my training in Poland at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw. Since then, I developed my career in Poland. I had two years' experience of working in a ceramics studio at the Institute of Design Kielce before I decided to come back for PhD studies at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw.

Lately, you've been changing your locations so fast it makes one dizzy. You are invited to symposia and residencies around the world. Right now you're in Montana, aren't you?

After finishing my studies in Poland, I decided not to have my own studio but to travel around the world and visit different ceramics centres. It brings me so much joy and I feel that during this time I learn a lot. Right now, I am in Montana in the United States as an artist in residence at Archie Bray Foundation, Speyer Fellow. It is my first time joining a Long-Term Residency, here at Archie Bray it can last one or two years. My previous residencies were 1-4 months long and I have changed locations quite often. The ceramic process is quite time-consuming of course, it is always an intense time to have everything ready before the end of residency.

When one reads or hears your name, your fascinating and colourful sculptures immediately come to mind. Please tell us what it is all about. Is





there maybe a message for the viewer in the sculptures or the paintings on the sculptures?

I enjoy every part of the process of making ceramic sculptures, but painting on them is one of my favourites. I love layering stories and playing with two and three dimensions. Every time there is a story in the paintings on the sculptures, sometimes it is connected and talks more about the character which I create, and sometimes there is a separate story. The story in the painting layer is usually more dynamic and has more movement. It is such a playful moment, and I can easily change the mood of the sculpture while I am painting on it.

Some of the magnificent figures are larger than life. You can see that very nicely when you stand next to them. What I wonder is: what do you have to pay special attention to when you work so large?

I like to feel small, I would often even introduce myself as Janinka, which is like a small Janina. When I build sculptures larger than me, I finally can feel like the smallest member of the group. When I work on a bigger scale I pay special attention to the technical part. Every step is important, how to build a sculpture, load it in the kiln, and later how to pack it, transport and install it. I like team work in this respect. I learn a lot from other artists' experiences in those aspects and like to learn from my own mistakes. When I worked on the sculpture Guldagergaard Conversation for the sculpture park in Skalskor, Denmark I like that I was building the sculpture on top of the kiln, which was built by Andres Allik, I didn't need to think about how to move the sculpture for the firing, I think it is the most fragile moment of working on a larger scale.



What is the technical process that led to the group of figures shown here?

I often start work on the sculpture from the drawing. I prepared several drawings before I started to work on this sculpture. I like how my hand with brush and ink feels more freedom and it can introduce some new ideas to the process. I worked with stoneware here, and I like when it has coarser grog in it. I used stoneware called Peets, which is produced here at Archie Bray. I work in slab building technique, and I am happy to use a

slab roller if the studio has one. The thickness of the sculpture depends on the size, this one is probably around 5 mm. When the sculpture is finished and drying, I polish the surface a lot before bisque firing and after the bisque firing, I polish the surface again. I painted the sculpture group with underglazes, and I did just one firing at 1250° C, I fired at the gas kiln in oxidation. If I use engobe and glazes I make multiple firings, but for underglaze decoration I often fire sculptures just once.

If you hadn't become a ceramist,



what other training would have fascinated you?

In my childhood, I dreamed of becoming a dancer. At the age of fourteen, my art teacher recommended to not divide my time between both interests and choose the one in which I would like to continue my education. I remember the day when I quit dancing classes, I cried for many hours non-stop, but it was a necessary decision at that time, I got more time to prepare for the exams at art college.

The time of uncertainties related to the pandemic seems to be behind us, but

there are still very sad events in this world to worry us, like the war of aggression against your homeland. I don't mean to be intrusive, but allow me to ask you this: do you process this in your sculptures?

My works are influenced by the countries, the cultures I am visiting, and people whom I meet. I do not often make work related to specific events. The recent situation is a painful topic for me and my family, but yes, I did one sculpture that related to it, but not a whole project.

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview partner is **Takekoshi Ito, Japan**. Evelyne Schoenmann is a ceramist, writer and curator. She is an AIC / IAC member and lives and works in Basel, Switzerland.
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