

In studio with Taketoshi Ito

Evelyne Schoenmann



Take, I know you have an architectural background. Would you please tell us a bit about your biography and professional career?

Well, I have majored in environmental construction engineering for two years in a University until I dropped out the school. And I believe that the background

of architecture does not have any effect on my works since I was not much into the field. The only reason I majored in architecture is because it seemed to be the only major that my conservative father would approve at that time. He would have never approved of me studying art or interior design. After I dropped out of

the University, I started working as an apprentice at a pottery manufacturing studio in Mashiko in 2002. But the same year, my master passed away. After four years of studying various techniques on my own and trying to find out my style, I left the manufacture and became independent. I was making my living by selling my works at events for about 2 years, and started holding exhibitions 3 years after that. I established my carving style in these 10 years, and I am still struggling to find the way to get close to the ideal.

Do you think as a ceramist living in the ceramics town of Mashiko is an advantage or rather a disadvantage?

I believe there are more advantages than disadvantages. Mashiko is such an accepting town for the immigrants and those who wish to be a ceramist even without any references, unlike other ceramics towns. Pottery studios and master ceramists are open for the apprentices.

So you easily get to meet the people who have the same objectives in the town and talk about the future and dreams or exchange information. Also, it was not complicated to purchase what you need for production when there was no online shopping. One thing I could say about this town is that Mashiko has such a laid-back-town atmosphere, and change is very slow. It sometimes makes me feel there is not enough stimulation to conduct creation.

Your elaborately carved works remind me of Gothic stained-glass windows or Persian carvings of art work. Please tell us what animates you to create these forms and patterns.

That is an interesting observation. What inspires me is every beauty I have seen or heard or felt in the world including outstanding buildings I have seen in Europe. That might be why my work gives an impression as such. My work



is the projection of my emotion when something powerful strikes a chord deeply, a power of fine art, architecture, music, food and nature and so on. And I tend to be attracted to prayers, sacred things, and things with a strong view of life and death. Because of the traumatic childhood I had, I used to doubt the

meaning of existence, and the beauty of life and death still fascinates me.

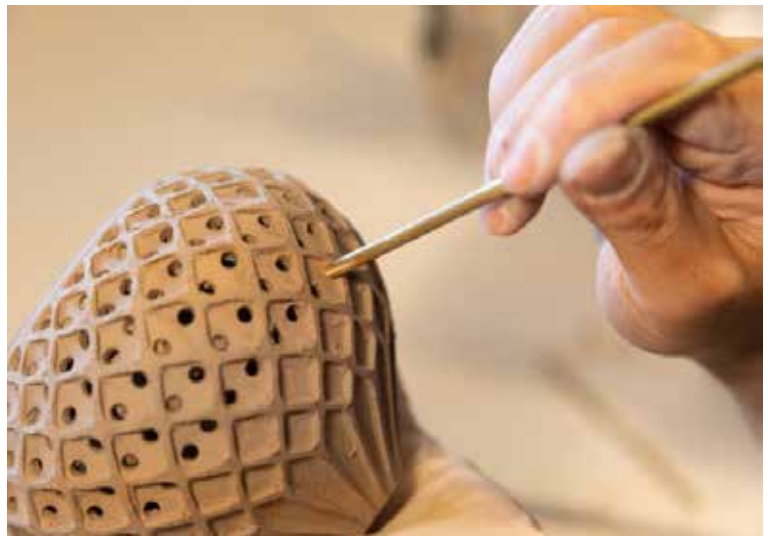
I can imagine that such experiences leave their mark on you. Can you give our readers technical recommendations for the step-by-step procedure based on your artwork shown here?

A. Humidity

Set the humidity of the studio at 80% with the humidifier to avoid the clay drying rapidly.

B. Shaping

Shape the clay with the potter's wheel when you've come up with the design, making sure the thickness of the clay is



suitable for the design. The type of clay I use here is translucent white porcelain.

C. Drying procedure – trimming

This is an important process in the carved work. The green wares need to be sat in the humidified room for a few days in order to keep the moisture on the surface and inside the clay. Slowly dry them until the perfect moment for the trimming.

D. Carving

First, draw the lines to balance the patterns. It is done all free-hand with-

out any measurements. Then, shave one layer to set the depth of the clay. Carve the patterns after the shaving. This process requires much speed because once started shaving, the clay starts to get dry very fast.

E. Bisque firing

Fire to the temperature of 780°C.

F. Water-repellent and glazing

Paint the water repellent to all the parts except where there will be gold glaze, using a brush.

Paint the transparent glaze on the

parts where there will be the gold glaze.

G. Firing

I use a gas kiln for reduction firing and electric kiln for oxidation firing.

I do the oxidation firing with the electric kiln with the temperature of 1280°C for about 18 hours on this work.

H. Gold glaze

Add gold glazing on the parts where there is transparent glaze.

I. Final firing

Fire in the electric kiln to the temperature of 800°C to get rid of the impurities.



When I look at pieces like the one you exhibited in Mashiko at the Fourth-Dimension show of the Museum of Ceramic Art last year, I really marvel about how you fire those most delicate pieces without getting them deformed in the heat of the kiln.

Those works with carving can be delicate and fragile. The shape is easily destroyed by gravity and the heat in the kiln. For many years, I had to learn the perfect thickness of the clay, the balance of the carving patterns and how the clay changes shapes in the kiln, with countless mistakes and failures until I succeeded in making the desired shape. There are times when I make a clay pillar inside the spheres to maintain the shape. Unfortunately, the shape of the pillar inside the work is not visible, but I apply the structural rationality of Gaudi's architecture.

What are your ideas, wishes or plans for the future?

In the near future, there will be some exhibitions and events collaborating with restaurants planned

in several places in Japan and cities overseas. I will be able to put my passion to create pieces that people who visit the exhibitions would enjoy. And I will continue to create and launch pieces which could amuse my customers, who have been super supportive of my work for the past 20 years. At the same time, I am excited to see what is ahead of me, while continuing to challenge myself, to confront myself and to work with sincerity.

Taketoshi Ito

Instagram: [take_to_shi](https://www.instagram.com/take_to_shi)

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Evelyne Schoenmann's next interview partner is **Sabina Betz, Switzerland**

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